THE Hudson REVIEW

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The Contents of Case No. 794

JOAN MURRAY:
Coming of Age on the Harlem—a long poem

EDWARD JOSEPH SHOBEN, JR.:
Impulse and Virtue in Jane Austen

JOHN O'BRIEN:
Pictures of My Father—a memoir

MARCIA B. SIEGEL:
Tales of Love and Sake

Poems by JOHN HOLLOWAY, ANNE S. PERLMAN, JEROME MAZZARO, KRASSIN HIMMIRSKY, JAMES REISS, ROBERT SWANSON, PRESCOTT EVARTS, JR., OLIVIA HOLMES, BARRY SPACKS, ARNOLD KLEIN.

Reviews by ROBERT S. CLARK, CHARLES W. MILLARD, VERNON YOUNG, WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD, DANA GIOIA, CLARA CLAIBORNE PARK, JAY PARINI, JEFFREY MEYERS.

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To Our Readers

A new book by an Advisory Editor of THE HUDSON REVIEW has recently been published. In accordance with our policy, the book will not be reviewed in these pages, but is listed below for the interest of our readers:

HAYDEN CARRUTH: *The Sleeping Beauty.* Harper & Row. $11.95; $6.95.

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SEAMUS HEANEY

Bennett Award Acceptance Speech, 1982

THE CITATION IN WHICH THE JUDGES PRAISE the body of lyric poetry which earned me the honour of the Bennett Award is generous and lyrical itself. And speaking of the judges, I can truly say that never was the old reliable connection between Flower and May more welcome to me—though in fact it was Paula Deitz's letter which first brought me the good news, so from now on her name too will be connected in my mind with a certain springtime rapture. I was astonished at the unlooked-for honour of being chosen as this year's winner and abashed, though admittedly for not very long, at the unexpected windfall of the prize money itself.

To put it at its most general, prizes like this are society's way of ratifying the artistic enterprise. Money changes hands and by this simple, universally interesting transaction, even the most philistine among us can recognize that something important must be afoot. Just as the gods could once gild human beings with a momentary numinous presence, so the publicity attaching to literary awards can highlight the name and face of a poet for the day, and glamour him away into the element of the successful.

Which is why, of course, writers who receive awards and, notoriously, those who do not, harbour something like suspicion in these auspicious and gratifying circumstances. A conviction remains that the solitary encounter with more intractable and unpresentable aspects of ourselves and our world is the truly redemptive activity of the imaginative man or woman, and any writer will be superstitious about releasing himself too headily from those claims. We are reluctant to connive too much with the success story aspect of things.

Yet the slave in the chariot of the triumphant Roman general who kept reminding him that he was a mortal did not, I am sure, completely spoil the general's ride. To remind myself and you of the responsibilities of the creative life at this very moment when I am sweetened and fortified by one of its most enviable rewards is to re-enact, in the context of this less martial triumph, that ritual which must strike us all as just, pleasing and precautionary.

I thank and congratulate the sponsors of this prize for ratifying in such an open-handed way that covenant we all hope for between artist and audience. I thank the editors and staff of *The Hudson Review* for their unfailing grace and hospitality since the start of our recent happy connection. And again, I thank the judges.

I have been lucky that my work has been welcomed by many

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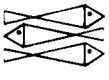

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readers and critics and audiences in this country, and have no doubt that my being Irish has been a factor, one way or another, in the relationship. So on this occasion I would remind you that I am only one of many mightily gifted poets now writing in Ireland whose creative effort, north and south, I share and learn from: an effort to live amphibiously between Ireland and elsewhere, between our past and our future, between our common culture and our free-willed time-bound selves. And as lyric poets we continue in the faith that this good adventure will be well served by what the Russian poet called "the steadfastness of speech articulation."

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EDWARD JOSEPH SHOBEN, JR.

Impulse and Virtue in Jane Austen: Sense and Sensibility in Two Centuries

In an essay unfinished at the time of his death, Lionel Trilling raised the question of "Why We Read Jane Austen." One answer—an answer that Trilling did not give although he understood it consummately well—lies in the ways that Austen's novels provide perspective on, a correction to, and a protection against the fads, the momentary forces, and the temptations of our own time.

Many of those fads, forces, and temptations arise in major degree from a universal and fundamental human experience that is at once affective and cognitive, emotional and intellectual, in its character. Nowhere has that experience been better expressed than in Matthew Arnold's Marguerite poems. Beginning with a driving declaration of "This truth—to prove, and make thine own: / 'Thou hast been, shalt be, art, alone,' " Arnold elaborates his theme:

> . . . in the sea of life enisled,
> With echoing straits between us thrown,
> Dotting the shoreless watery wild,
> We mortal millions live alone . . .
>
> . . . a longing like despair
> Is to their farthest caverns sent;
> For surely once, they feel, we were
> Parts of a single continent . . .

But despite the despairing longing,

> Like driftwood spars, which meet and pass
> Upon the boundless ocean-plain,
> So on the sea of life, alas!
> Man meets man—meets, and quits again.

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However intense the yearning for a lasting and secure intimacy, human beings remain separated from one another by "The unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea."

That feeling of loneliness and that apprehension of the unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea that somehow washes us apart from each other make relationships chancy and authentic intimacy a rare and fragile phenomenon. This widely shared experience echoes through the history of our efforts to understand ourselves psychologically and to grapple with the moral dimensions of our humanity. Its roots reach deep into our basic nature: when, early in the helpless dependency of our infancy and early childhood, we discover our selfhood—when we make the momentous discrimination between the *me* and the *not-me*—we confront the conflict that we must endure and manage for the rest of our lives. On the one hand, whatever our inherited potentials may be, our attributes that we call distinctively human depend on our membership in a group. Unless we are citizens of a society and participants in a culture, we develop neither the symbolic skills distinctive to our species, nor a sense of moral or aesthetic values, nor interpersonal competencies, including feelings of sympathy and the capacity for love, nor the power of imagination. Inescapably, we are cultural animals. On the other hand, ridden as we are by imperious drives and self-aggrandizing aspirations, we experience the culture as basically nay-saying. Its rules and restrictions hold us in thrall, limiting our expression, the play of our impulses, and our gratification. Arnold again serves as our spokesman in his line, "Most men in a brazen prison live," ringing a change on Wordsworth's "shades of the prison-house begin to close / Upon the growing boy" and foreshadowing Dickens' treatment of the same theme, the theme of culture as a prison, in *Little Dorrit*. Simultaneously, we necessarily rely on culture for the very groundwork of our personhood, and yet feel trapped and cabined by the network of regulations and commandments that the culture weaves around us.

We know this state of affairs as alienation. Alienation comprises two major and related elements. One is the lifelong warfare, ranging from a condition of wary truce to literally bloody engagement, between self and culture. The other is the emotionally toned perception by the self of all else, espe-

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cially other people, as in some degree alien, in some measure threatening, and—perhaps most important—in some respects unknowable and therefore unreachable. Alienation defines the unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea that enisles us and both enforces and accounts for our loneliness. Because the loneliness of alienation bears so close a relationship to its embattled character, it takes on the additional emotional color of fear and hostility. Anticipations of disappointment and victimization, doubts about the depth and durability of love and friendship, fright at the odds faced in achieving ambitions or simply in maintaining a decent way of living, a quickness to fury at the wrongs we perceive ourselves to suffer at times at the hands of others or of "society," all have their origins in some significant sense in the experience of alienation. The pains of human loneliness are matched and compounded by their complexity.

Obviously, this condition of humanity varies widely in its intensity and in its clarity in consciousness from person to person, from society to society, and from time to time. In a general and oversimplified fashion, we can recognize five broadly conceived cultural climates that provide the context within which the loneliness of alienation is given shape, and which influence its manifestations in feeling, idea, and conduct.

The first two entail an ethos that emphasizes social controls, that favors the integrity of society over the variousness and potentials of its individual members, and that values and requires conformity to cultural norms as the hallmark of personal citizenship. In a very real sense, W. H. Auden's "The Unknown Citizen" catches the essence of this kind of *Zeitgeist*:

> He was found by the Bureau of Statistics to be
> One against whom there was no official complaint,
> And all the reports on his conduct agree
> That, in the modern sense of an old-fashioned word, he was a saint,
> For in everything he did he served the Greater Community.

But "Was he free? Was he happy? The question is absurd: / Had anything been wrong, we should certainly have heard."

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This hegemony of the Greater Community divides into two main forms, one authoritarian and the other traditional. To illustrate the first, we need only to remind ourselves of Imperial Rome, France during the Terror and under Napoleon, the sociopolitical character of Germany from Bismarck through Hitler, Russia during much of its Tsarist history and in its Soviet transformation, Maoist China in the years following the Revolution of 1949, and contemporary Iran both under the Shah and as the Islamic Republic. Deliberate and governmentally administered policies of repression are balanced by the distracting rewards of bread and circuses; and the restrictive and typically cruel demands for absolute personal loyalty and the subordination of the individual personality to the state are offset by the conveyed sense of belonging to a somehow highly favored—sometimes a divinely favored—group with a glorious destiny, often to be achieved by the conquest of lesser peoples. In traditional cultures, on the other hand, the hegemony of the Greater Community maintains itself through rather different processes. Customs, rituals and well-reinforced habits, the deeply ingrained ways of the forebears provide the bases for a profound allegiance to cultural norms. The sense of self turns on a learned pride in suppressing what is distinctive in one's personality in favor of an honoring of the ancient rules of society; and shame and guilt, rather than the fear characteristic of authoritarian regimes, become the emotional deterrents to individualistic expression and dissident affirmations of personhood. Medieval Japan serves as one example of this kind of traditional culture, and even contemporary Japan illustrates central features of it. Bali represents a clear case in point. So do the Himalayan cultures of Nepal, Sikkim, and Tibet.

In contrast to authoritarian and traditional climates in which the experience of alienated loneliness must be managed, the *Zeitgeist* of harmony between the individual and his group stands as a rarely achieved but not impossible alternative. Theoretically and ideally, the Quaker meeting, in which the Sense of the Meeting must be brought into acceptable balance with the Inner Light, is the most striking illustration, although the aims of the Society of Friends often encounter in actuality the frustrations that human flesh and the human spirit are heir to. Efforts within organizations to govern them-

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selves by consensus rather than by vote, by the achievement of wide assent instead of by the politics of the ballot, represent a form of this kind of atmosphere in which personal needs and yearnings enjoy an equal footing with social requirements. Conceivably, Periclean Athens, probably excluding the helots, exemplified in a short-lived but bright moment a society that at least in significant measure embodied this kind of harmony. And the dream of such a social state of affairs finds an at once vivid and wistful expression in the legend of Camelot and accounts in part for the enduring appeal of the story of Arthur and his Round Table.

Our last two categories each emphasize the person above the culture and put a high premium on individuality, but they differ from one another as markedly as do their opposites, the authoritarian and the traditional climates. One, the ethos of personal rights, claims the broadest latitude possible for the enhancement of the self through freedom of expression, some adequate share in the economic advantages that society affords, and access to the opportunities for self-development that the culture makes available. In political terms, at its best, this climate defines the essence of democracy; at its worst, it deteriorates into the chaotic forms of anarchy. The other, the ethos of competitive individualism, gives its strongest sanctions to self-reliance and to the achievement of socially acknowledged selfhood through energy, daring, and cleverness. Politically, it represents, at its best, the freedom and vitality of a republic; at its worst, it degenerates into varieties of oligarchy. The two diverge from each other most markedly in the roles that they assign to the state. In the first, government has the role of protecting the individual from the vicissitudes of corporate life and even from the consequences of his own weakness or errant ways. Government's prime business lies in the protection and enhancement of personal rights and in the assurance within broad limits of personal welfare. In the second, government plays a highly curtailed role in the group's experience. Its regulatory and restrictive functions are reduced to a minimum; its concerns with personal rights and personal welfare are sharply limited; and its main responsibilities focus on national defense and the support not of rights but of relatively large-scale opportunities for the expansion and development of business and in-

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dustry. One demands that the state intervene actively to protect and to insure personal rights and welfare; the other demands just as imperatively that the state support the individual by staying out of his way, by leaving him unfettered by cabining laws and regulations and by the expense of taxes.

From some points of view, the history of the United States has been a history of swings and shifts between these two individualistic cultural atmospheres, tempered by a relatively low-keyed but significant regard for the Greater Community. In the last two decades, however, we seem to have experienced a remarkably rapid movement from a *Zeitgeist* that, often in a violently extreme form, emphasized rights and welfare to one that puts a premium on self-reliance and a minimum of state intervention. From the concern for civil rights and the counter-culture of the 1960s, we have plunged into an era symbolized by supply-side economics and a withdrawal of the state from any major preoccupation with racial equality, with the safeguarding of the natural environment, with the destiny of the poor, or with the extension of educational access or other forms of personal development for those who cannot privately afford them. As different as these cultural climates clearly are, a common element runs through them and gives psychological significance to their dynamics: although various aspects of a complex population may be differentially affected by these massive social trends, a narcissistic concentration on selfhood remains central and constant. But the notion of a Greater Community has a degree of validity that its association with authoritarian and traditional societies obscures. As cultural animals, human beings cannot escape coming to terms with their inherent need for a corporate social surround, and that factor of community does not inescapably entail either the tyranny of fascist states or the static ossification of traditional ones. Yet neither the ethos of personal rights nor the ethos of competitive individualism, in the relatively extreme forms in which we have known them since the early 1960s, has instigated many efforts toward harmony in the clash between self and culture; whereas both have reinforced powerful narcissistic tendencies.

Psychological and psychiatric thought, embedded in history and responsive to the currents of the time as well as to accu-

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mulated knowledge, has reflected in noticeable degree these cultural developments. The idea that psychosis represents a superior route to deeper human understandings, a kind of blessed epistemic state, as formulated by R. D. Laing, Gregory Bateson, and John Weir Perry, is one of the more dramatic indications of the participation by psychology and psychiatry in the culture of narcissism. The widespread popularity of "new" psychotherapies like primal scream, Reichean body therapy, encounter groups, marathon groups, the forms of so-called Gestalt awareness developed by Frederick Perls, and other comparable treatment technologies attests to the same phenomenon. In an oddly similar fashion, the movement towards the use of drugs to modify and control psychopathological conditions is not entirely free of the broader disposition in society to alleviate the discomforts of being human through chemical agents. If boredom, anxiety, and self-doubt—all of them related to that truth: Thou hast been, shalt be, art, alone—can be momentarily vanquished, no matter how Pyrrhic the victory, by marijuana or quaaludes, then cannot schizophrenia be conquered by a more sophisticated pharmacology, thus by-passing the strenuousness and heartache that managing the conflict between self and culture requires?

Commonalities do not, of course, imply identities. Research and clinical efforts with tricyclic drugs or lithium in the treatment of depressions and manic states are not at all the same as sniffing cocaine or smoking pot. There are undoubtedly persons who have enjoyed very real benefits from involvement in some of the new psychotherapies. Our present purposes entail only an underscoring of the way in which a dominant *value* runs through these psychologic and psychopharmacological developments: self-fulfillment or self-actualization seems to be the *summum bonum*, to be attained independently of the larger culture (or even at the expense of it) and with as small an investment of energy as possible. This value reflects both the ethos of personal rights and the ethos of competitive individualism; and if self-actualization demands some degree of reinterpretation as one or the other of these cultural climates becomes dominant, the reconceptualization comes easily and with no special labors of conscious-

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ness, riding the tide of the *Zeitgeist*. There is little cause for wonder at the ways that our thinking about the positive aspects of personality and about mental health, in psychiatric contexts as well as more popularly, are affected by these currents.

If the notion of self-actualization summarizes the fads, the forces, and the temptations of our time, then we must be struck by a curious parallel in the atmosphere of Jane Austen's age. As the spirit of the eighteenth century, a zestful ebullience disciplined by the social conception and value of decorum, gave way to the romanticism of the early nineteenth century, with its taste for the excitement of revolt and for eccentricity as the hallmark of distinctive selfhood, a new philosophy of sentiment became articulate and popular. More in the air of social change than the result of any one person's impact, this new point of view found expression in a number of writers. Two of the most influential were Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third Earl of Shaftesbury.

Shaftesbury argued that each individual possesses an innate moral sense and that happiness may be achieved by attending to the urgings that arise, in the form of feelings, from that component of one's personal endowment. Decisions about conduct, therefore, are to be made through consulting the heart rather than the head, through acknowledging the authenticity of feelings rather than the authority of tradition or of principles distilled from cultural experience. In many ways, Shaftesbury's warmly received views echoed Rousseau's powerful insistence that "Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains," that each member of the human species is "naturally" good but suffers corruption by his commerce with society, and that the integrity and identity of the self depend basically on the recognition and cultivation of sensibility, feeling, passion: I feel, therefore I am. Neither rational thought nor the norms of one's social heritage can properly constrain sentiment, but sentiment supplies at once the motive and the cue for happiness, for the moral life, and for the welfare of the state.

For neither Rousseau nor Shaftesbury does the human being appear as Aristotle's rational animal (or Vico's imaginative

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one), as the fallen angel of Christianity, or as the inheritor of the tragic combination envisaged by classical humanism: of energizing impulses that threaten frequently to prove self-destructively imperious, and potentials for self-control and self-restraint that threaten just as frequently and self-destructively to prove either impotent or too restrictive. Personhood consists not in a critically achieved membership in a culture nor in an equally critically achieved winnowing of a tradition. Neither does it lie in the management of the conflicts between the interests of the self and the interests of society. It emerges from a maximizing of individuality through the fullest possible self-expression and self-gratification. For Rousseau and Shaftesbury, the voices of the dawning romanticism of the early 1800s, as for Abraham Maslow, Norman Brown, R. D. Laing, Frederick Perls, and other spokesmen for the romanticism of our own day, self-actualization marks the highest good.

Because Jane Austen deeply prized the individual and richly understood the rhythms of growth, decay, and renewal in human experience, she was not unsympathetic to this position. But because she regarded it, in so extreme a form, as a dangerously mistaken reading of the human condition, she set herself firmly against it. *Sense and Sensibility*, the first of her novels in point of composition, speaks for her entire canon; and if it lacks some of the fictional sophistication and some of the subtleties of both insight and style that characterize the later works, it remains one of those provocative literary documents whose educative impact lies in the delight which it furnishes, the kind of delight which John Erskine claimed was a necessary condition of becoming "intelligent" in a functional modern sense. A significant portion of that educative delight flows from the complexity and depth of Jane Austen's psychological insights as revealed and dramatized in the characters she creates.

A case in point is Marianne Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility*. She has "a life, a spirit, an eagerness" that refreshingly command a warm admiration. An almost palpable and often touching sincerity underlies many of her enthusiasms. Because she values good taste, she dislikes "jargon of every kind"; during her conversation with Edward and Elinor about

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the country scenery around Barton, she comments, "I have sometimes kept my feelings to myself because I could find no language to describe them in but what was worn and hackneyed out of all sense and meaning." Individualistically distinctive as she is, Marianne's manner "err[s] against every commonplace notion of decorum" yet seldom carries the color of egotism or selfishness. When, for example, Mrs. Ferrars dismisses Elinor's painted screens with a curt and uncomprehending "Very pretty," and then speaks positively of Miss Morton's landscapes, Marianne's reaction glows with sisterly affection:

> "This is admiration of a very particular kind! What is Miss Morton to us? Who knows, or who cares, for her? It is Elinor of whom *we* think and speak."
>
> And so saying, she took the screens out of her sister-in-law's hands to admire them herself as they ought to be admired.
>
> Mrs. Ferrars looked exceedingly angry, and drawing herself up more stiffly than ever, pronounced in retort this bitter phillippic, "Miss Morton is Lord Morton's daughter."

Marianne's spontaneity, enthusiasm, and loyalty contrast favorably with the money-grubbing, class-bound, and dully mediocre segment of society within which she moves; and there is no doubt that this favorable contrast is not only the purpose of the early scenes in the novel but one of Jane Austen's pervasive themes. The dangers in Marianne's romantic disposition become visible as her relationship with Willoughby develops. To a considerable extent, he is a creation of her imagination rather than a human being seen as in himself he really is. He certainly reveals an "ardour," "talents," and a "spirit" that make Ferrars and Brandon pale by comparison; but from the moment when he becomes her "preserve" by rescuing Marianne from her fall in the rain, Willoughby is conceived, and quite willingly participates in the conception, as "the hero of a favourite story." Learning of his achievements as a dancer, Marianne exclaims, "That is what I like; that is what a young man ought to be. Whatever be his pursuits, his eagerness in them should know no moderation, and leave him no sense of fatigue."

At their first meeting, when he displays a zest for dancing

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that matches her own, she gives him "such a look of approbation" that she captures his attentions for the rest of the evening. As their acquaintance ripens, the "general conformity of judgment" that they discover between them results essentially from her expressed enthusiasms and his self-serving acquiescence in them. Marianne brings out her favorite authors, commenting on them rapturously, and he simply assents "in all her decisions, catches all her enthusiasm." In short, Marianne makes Willoughby into an extension of herself. "I could not be happy," she says, "with a man whose taste did not in every point coincide with my own. He must enter into all my feelings; the same books, the same music must charm us both." Her love for him is a form of self-love, a feature of her narcissism. In response, he egocentrically capitalizes on her narcissistic infatuation, using it to increase her accessibility and his uncommitted enjoyment of her.

In Willoughby's company, although impelled far less by his urgings than by her own impulses toward self-actualization through their relationship, Marianne violates with increasing seriousness the norms of her society. She accepts, for example, his gift of a horse, paying no attention to the way in which the cost of the animal's maintenance would overburden her family's straitened financial resources. Charged with the even greater impropriety of accepting so expensive a gift from a man she has met so recently, she reacts with an acerbity illustrative of romantic individualism: "It is not time or opportunity that is to determine intimacy; it is disposition alone." When Elinor convinces Marianne to decline the present, Willoughby says, ". . . the horse is still yours, though you cannot use it now . . . When you leave Barton to form your own establishment in a more lasting home, Queen Mab shall receive you." Overhearing this statement, in which Willoughby uses Marianne's Christian name, Elinor is persuaded that the couple are engaged although, in reality, they have arrived at no such agreement.

Not long afterward, Marianne and Willoughby breach decorum even further by making an unchaperoned visit to Allenham, the estate of Mrs. Smith, the elderly benefactress of whom he is the heir. Their appearance at Allenham is not only unseemly under the social conventions that obtain; it re-

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veals a marked insensitivity to the feelings of others. Willoughby's unannounced appearance with a young woman can only suggest to Mrs. Smith a blatant eagerness for her death so that he can inherit and occupy her property. When Elinor tactfully attempts to point out both Marianne's social *gaffe* and her thoughtlessness, her sister responds with pure Shaftesbury, pure Perls: ". . . if there had been any real impropriety in what I did, I should have been sensible of it at the time, for we always know, when we are acting wrong, and with such a conviction I could have had no pleasure." If it feels good, then it must be moral.

For Marianne, morality is an inherent quality of selfhood rather than a process of judgment based on social rules. Confronted by a world in which pettiness and egotism appear virtually universal, she rebels by setting the authenticity of her own impulses above the authority of society. As her impulses become intensified by her passion for Willoughby, she increasingly substitutes private desires for public norms. "I felt myself," she tells Elinor, "to be as solemnly engaged to him as if the strictest legal covenant had bound us to each other." He, however, refuses to acknowledge the hegemony of her impulses and yearnings, prudently and self-servingly observing the social forms when doing so promises benefits:

> They arrived in due time. . . . Elinor perceived Willoughby . . . in earnest conversation with a very fashionable-looking woman. . . . At last he turned round again and regarded them both; [Marianne] started up, and pronouncing his name in a tone of affection, held out her hand to him. He approached, and addressing himself rather to Elinor than Marianne, as if wishing to avoid her eye, and determined not to observe her attitude, inquired in a hurried manner after Mrs. Dashwood, and asked how long they had been in town. Elinor was robbed of all presence of mind by such an address and was unable to say a word. But the feelings of her sister were instantly expressed. Her face was crimsoned over, and she exclaimed in a voice of the greatest emotion, "Good God! Willoughby, what is the meaning of this? Have you not received my letters? Will you not shake hands with me?"

The sincerity of Marianne's sensibility contrasts sharply with the bogus quality in Willoughby's, but sincerity, like love, is not enough. When Willoughby turns from her to what he

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regards as greener pastures—and the meeting in London is the first sign of such a turning—Marianne is plunged into the cold waters of the unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea. Robbed of the object of her impulses, she feels helpless, miserable, and forever doomed to wretchedness. "Mine is a misery," she cries, "which nothing can do away," and

> misery such as mine has no pride. I care not who knows that I am wretched. The triumph of seeing me so may be open to all the world. Elinor, Elinor, they who suffer little may be proud and independent as they like, may resist insult or return mortification, but I cannot. I must feel—I must be wretched—and they are welcome to enjoy the consciousness of it that can.

Her impulses and desires frustrated, Marianne does not express her disappointment, sadly shoulder her unhappy experience, and get on with her life; she "must *feel*." She actively courts grief. She wallows in misery, finding herself more interesting by virtue of her overwhelming emotional burden. What Elinor recognizes as an "eager fancy" leads her "to the extreme of languid indolence and selfish repining," and her illness at Cleveland is clearly a psychosomatic one; had she died, her death could only have been by suicide. Marianne comes to a full awareness of this state of affairs: "My illness . . . had been entirely brought on by myself, by such negligence of my own health as I had felt even at the time to be wrong. Had I died, it would have been self-destruction."

In her persuasive development of Marianne's character, Jane Austen demonstrates how the self, divorced from culture and unrestrained by internalized norms of judgment and conduct, becomes cripplingly alienated and unbearably lonely. Accepting only her impulses as the basis for moral behavior, Marianne rejects both the obligations and the comforts entailed by family, society, and tradition. The consequences of her extreme and romantic individualism are abundantly clear. Even if they were not, Elinor's contrasting character and her quite different conduct in response to bitter personal disappointment underscore Austen's insistence on self-control and attention to socially derived moral principles. When, for example, Elinor learns that Edward Ferrars—*her* Edward—has been secretly engaged for four years to the "illiterate, art-

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ful, and selfish" Lucy Steele, she is genuinely and understandably devastated. But she painfully thinks her way through the situation as it has been presented to her, arrives at "the conviction of having done nothing to merit her present unhappiness," and is "consoled by the belief that Edward had done nothing to forfeit her esteem." She then weeps "for him more than for her self," and when she joins her mother and sisters for dinner "only two hours after she had first suffered the extinction of all her dearest hopes, no one would have supposed . . . that Elinor was mourning in secret over obstacles which must divide her forever from the object of her love."

Yet Elinor as the embodiment of "sense" typically commands less critical sympathy and appreciation than Marianne as the representative of "sensibility." Jane Austen created, so goes the argument, a heroine who is chilly, bloodless, and unadmirable. One suspects that this judgment results from its being more difficult to apprehend powerful passions regulated but not destroyed than to perceive those passions pressing down and running over. Actually, Elinor serves two functions in *Sense and Sensibility,* and their interrelatedness attests to Austen's genius in depicting the complex workings of character. Elinor is at once the only normative figure in the novel and its center of consciousness.

Such members of the *dramatis personae* as Mr. and Mrs. John Dashwood, Mrs. Ferrars, Mrs. Jennings, and Lucy Steele exhibit degrees of "sense," but only in corrupted ways. For the most part, they populate and give life to that mercenary world of small-mindedness and mediocre aspiration that Austen kept in such satiric and ironic focus. They observe social conventions less out of moral commitment than to serve their own short-range objectives. They differ markedly from Elinor, who simply recognizes the reality of social connections, understands the necessity for honoring them by courteous conduct, and thereby accords to others the same right of personal distinctiveness that she claims for herself. But courtesy and the avoidance wherever possible of hostile arguments and personality clashes do not mean a surrendering of judgment or principle. Marianne, unclear about her sister's rationale, challenges her:

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> "But I thought it was right, Elinor . . . to be guided wholly by the opinion of other people. I thought our judgments were given us merely to be subservient to those of our neighbors. This has always been your doctrine, I am sure."
>
> "No, Marianne, never. My doctrine has never aimed at the subjection of the understanding. All I have ever attempted to influence has been the behaviour. You must not confound my meaning. I am guilty, I confess, of having often wished you to treat our acquaintance in general with greater attention; but when have I advised you to adopt their sentiments or conform to their judgment in serious matters?"

Interestingly, Elinor's integrity, interpersonal sensitivity, and analytic intelligence allow more room for human diversity within the societal framework than does either Marianne's sensibility or the selfishness of the other characters. Marianne leaps to judgments from sheer appearance; the others form opinions for the most part on the basis of the immediate utility of those with whom they are acquainted: Will they provide amusement or enhance social status? Have they a relative who may prove an advantageous spouse for a child, or can they furnish economic benefits in some form? Elinor's "sense" results in a less demonstrative but more authentic warmth and a more genuinely appreciative tolerance of individual differences than do the attitudes of any other character in *Sense and Sensibility*. This observation applies with special importance to Edward Ferrars and Colonel Brandon. They are the two men who reflect the normative values of "sense." Unlike Mr. Darcy of *Pride and Prejudice* or Mr. Knightley of *Emma,* however, they are too pallid, too lacking in strength and drive, to offset effectively the self-interest and the petty passion for the expedient that pervade their social environment. As the core representative of Jane Austen's moral and psychological conception of human integration, of mental health, of virtue, Elinor carries a sizeable burden and carries it alone.

The graceful and large-hearted style with which she carries it is revealed through her function as the novel's center of consciousness. Edmund Wilson was probably the first to recognize Elinor's mind as the conduit through which the events described are transmitted to the reader. Commenting on the scene in which Marianne has her traumatic encounter with

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Willoughby in London, Wilson asked, "Isn't it rather the emotion of Elinor as she witnesses her sister's disaster than Marianne's emotion over Willoughby of which the poignancy is communicated to the reader?" If Volume I recounts the development of Marianne's love for Willoughby and her disappointment when he leaves Devonshire, if Volume II deals with her renewed hope in London and its shattering, and if Volume III centers on her dangerous illness and her slow recovery, all these concerns are given form typically by Elinor's intense experience of them.

In consequence, Austen gives us as witnessess access to Elinor's continuing internal struggles over her own love affair; over her sister's fortunes as Marianne falls passionately in love and then, her love thwarted, plunges just as passionately into a self-destructive depression; and over the quotidian problems of living as an integrated person under essentially unattractive circumstances. Other characters in the book find Elinor reserved to the point of opacity, rational to the point of coldness. But the reader, privy to her inmost thoughts and feelings, has his own experience of the world of *Sense and Sensibility* (and of Marianne's vicissitudes of both character and situation) mediated by hers. If he is moved, it is largely because she is, too; and Austen's device permits him to become aware of Elinor's compassion and her capacity for love, the cost in effort of her principled control of her strong passions, her susceptibility to anxiety and conflict, and the affective intensity that energizes her adherence to traditional (essentially Christian) values and her attempts to bring her impulses into congruence with them. Elinor's normative "sense" consists in powerful impulses governed but not repressed, in a critical respect for social conventions, and in a behavioral subordination of self to culturally derived principles with no necessary concomitant subordination of intelligence or examined personal judgment. Capable of anger and commanding a point of view that is very much her own, she often dislikes and resents the hard realities and the inescapable necessities of society, but she accepts them as ineluctable. Her acceptance contrasts sharply with the small-hearted egocentrism that permeates her world and with Marianne's "indulgence in feeling" and "nourishment of grief."

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Elinor's strict attention to "the business of self-command" relaxes only when Marianne has clearly recovered from her self-destructive illness. Tenderness wells up in her as she perceives her sister "restored to life, health, friends," and her heart is filled with "sensations of exquisite comfort, and . . . fervent gratitude." She confronts Willoughby, come "to obtain something like forgiveness"; and there may be no scene in English fiction more psychologically or morally momentous than this one where Elinor, the protagonist of "sense," arrives at an understanding of the man of narcissistic sensibility who has, "with little scruple, left her sister to misery," and grants him his forgiveness. Listening to Willoughby, Elinor's

> thoughts were silently fixed on the irreparable injury which too early an independence and its consequent habits of idleness, dissipation, and luxury, had made in the mind, the character, the happiness of a man who . . . united a disposition naturally open and honest, and a feeling, affectionate temper. The world had made him extravagant and vain. Extravagance and vanity had made him cold-hearted and selfish. Vanity . . . had involved him in a real attachment which extravagance . . . had required to be sacrificed . . . The attachment from which against honour, against feeling, against every better interest, he had outwardly torn himself, now, when no longer allowable, governed every thought; and [his expedient and self-serving marriage to Sophia] was likely to prove a source of unhappiness to himself of a far more incurable nature.

Penetrating perception and trenchant reflection combine in this formulation, and it has the color of an unsentimental but profound compassion. When Willoughby says, "And you *do* think something better of me than you did?" Elinor "assured him that she did; that she forgave, pitied, wished him well, was even interested in his happiness." And for a time thereafter, "Willoughby, 'poor Willoughby,' as she now allowed herself to call him, was constantly in her thoughts."

Similarly, when Edward Ferrars arrives and breaks the news of his freedom from the long secret engagement to Lucy Steele,

> Elinor could sit it no longer. She almost ran out of the room,

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> and as soon as the door was closed, burst into tears of joy, which at first she thought would never cease. Edward, who had till then looked anywhere rather than at her, saw her hurry away, and perhaps saw—or even heard—her emotion. . . .

Elinor is not at all devoid of feeling or incapable of expressing it. Characterologically, she gives a lower priority to her impulses, drives, and emotions than to the discipline that she refers to as "the business of self-command." In the same fashion, realizing that she is inherently a social being, she curbs personal propensities in favor of cultural principles. But within that context, she also displays and exemplifies a basic psychological and moral fact: emotional experience and emotional awareness are necessary components of the individual's ethical constitution if rationality is not to deteriorate into coldness and self-control into inhumanity.

Jane Austen's central point seems clear. Self-actualization through the stripping away of inhibitions, through the indulgence of feeling and the unbridled expression of emotion, may be the primary mark of virtue for contemporary psychiatric romanticism. For Austen, it lies far from the *sine qua non* of developmental maturity, effective personhood, or mental health. In her view, the effective self must be found through losing it in the larger social life of institutions, of traditions, and of inherited if critically evaluated principles. Marriage, what all the Austen novels are fundamentally "about," serves as an illustration. Although love and sexuality are crucially relevant to it, marriage defines more importantly a fusion of individual and social destinies. It forms a social unit with a potential impact on the future of the group—the immediate family itself, the larger estate, the community, the society. The fate of one's self-esteem is bound up with the spouse one chooses and the social career that that choice entails. In marriage, the self, which has derived from society, microcosmically represented by parents and siblings, flows back into society; and marriage serves as an institutional device for the management of that tension between the imperious demands of selfhood and the inescapable requirements of cultural membership out of which loneliness emerges. It is a way of mitigating the tides of the unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea.

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Coming from one who so deeply understood and so thoroughly valued individuality, Jane Austen's concept and her persuasive human exhibition of "sense" stand as a valuable perspective on the "sensibility" so rife among our present-day psychological and psychiatric ideologies, and it provides a helpful corrective to it. Increasingly in the Western world and especially in the United States, ostensibly to promote a more generous society that is more open to what Lionel Trilling called "human variousness and possibility," we have tended to think less and less about personal development and social interaction in moral terms and to consider these issues more and more from a clinical or psychotherapeutic point of view. We seem to be saying that if, through psychological intervention, we can help people to a more secure form of self-regard and to a more serviceable complement of interpersonal skills, then moral questions will take care of themselves. For Jane Austen, it was precisely the reverse: the mentally healthy person is one who acknowledges the reality of the moral realm and who grapples in a principled fashion with moral dilemmas. If we remember that human selves are also and ineluctably cultural beings, locked inescapably into and dependent on societies, then her thesis always deserves our serious attention.

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JOAN MURRAY

Coming of Age on the Harlem

for Kathy

I

My father would tie a life jacket
to a length of seaworn rope and dangle me
off the dock of The Harlem Boat Club float.
A strange baptism.
Down, down into the mad rushing river,
worm on a hook, a girl of six or seven,
I am let loose among water rats,
made sister to half-filled soda cans
floating vertically home from a picnic,
and to condoms that look like mama doll socks
in the unopened infant eye.
What man would toss his child to that swill?
He who can swim across the river,
whose arms churn a feud with the current.
He thinks he can hold me from any maelstrom.
Safe on the dock, I watch my father
float on his back from the Bronx
to Manhattan and back again.

II

Between the river edge and river park,
the New York Central tracks could fry a child.
How lucky to have this father with
long, strong arms to whisk me over
the wooden hooded, menacing third rail.
Can you remember when you reached your father's waist
and he told you of the serpent track where

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only birds could land in safety?
But one day my father takes me home a different way:
up the wooden bridge above the tracks
where huge phallic shapes have been burned in black
along its walls. Don't look. Don't look.
That sight will fry you up like Semele.
Now my strong father, my never ruffled father
pulls me roughly over the wooden planks.
His dark face reddened tells of great,
unspoken danger. When we reach the street,
he makes me promise never to come this way again,
never to go to the river shore without him.
Over my shoulder I form an opposite determination.

III

The Harlem Boat Club is the man place.
My father slips down twice a week to shower,
on weekends plays a sweaty game
of four wall ball. Outside in the garden,
I wander six years old among lilies
of the valley, Queen Anne's lace,
the shoreline irises and great climbing rose
that began as someone's potted plant.
Elmer, the muscular black cat,
drags a water rat to the front door.
I follow inside to the boat room,
run my hand along the lean flanks
of polished rowing sculls,
then up the stairway, pause at the wooden roster,
the names with gold stars dead in some war.
Then the sweat smell of the lockers,
the place where they held a party
to welcome the Beatty brothers home from Korea.
Off to the side, three men stand
naked in the steamy, tiled shower.
Quiet, I sit down on a bench
beside a girl my own age, who has also come
to pretend she doesn't notice.

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IV

Still my close, though distant, friend,
who sat with me in the men's locker room,
whose father had a strong right arm for handball,
whose mother and mine embarrassed
in their forties, had pregnancies,
who accompanied me through puberty
up and down the Harlem shore,
Kathy, in your Brahmin home in Brooklyn,
you say you want to rid your sleep
of those dirty years along the river.
But stop for a moment, stop trying
to make the river pass genteelly,
for there'll be no weaning from those waters.
Instead come back with me and watch
the sun glint off the rippling surface,
bearing the shore-hugging flow of turds and
condoms north to the Hudson.
You conjectured it all came from cabin cruisers
on some far-off glory ocean.
Kathy, would you have even looked
if you had known it came from humble tenements
on our Highbridge hill?
Could that one reflection
have darkened all your plans to sail?

V

"Mirror Mirror"
was the name you gave him,
a dexterous man with a pocket mirror
who could catch the Sunday morning sun
and flash it on our untouched child bodies.
A fairy tale gone haywire, Rapunzel in reverse:
"Mirror Mirror!"
we shouted from the bridge height,
and he below us in the river park
would hold his instrument to the sky like

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a sextant and calculate his grotesque angles.
Then we'd race down the ramp
just beyond his unknown reach and dive
behind the safety of a tree.
Oh God! Oh God! the heavy breathing,
ours, his, the fear, the vague desire
that was always escaped in time to
run home at one for Sunday dinner and meet our
unsuspecting fathers coming home from mass.

VI

Just before ten, just before your father's curfew,
you can station yourself on the highway bridge,
where it joins the ramp from the river park,
to see the couples rise up on the evening tide:
the sooty venuses with dirty hand marks
on white and fondled blouses, and
their boyfriends swaggering in teenage jeans.
You laugh, and send your first awakening lust
to follow them back to the neighborhood
where someday all will notice that you've grown.
And small children will stand on bridges
to flank your path
as you make your debut entry
to the nightly river park cotillion, on the arm
of some lanky boy with a dangling black curl,
and the cleanest, oh the cleanest hands.

VII

It's the boys with sprouts of pubic hair
who have the manliness to strip and jump
while tourists on the Circle Line around
Manhattan watch with Brownie cameras.
Bright faced fathers and mothers, pointing out
the river life to their wondering children.
They look for street kids in straw hats,

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the Tom Sawyers and Huck Finns of the Harlem
but only get an upraised finger.
Behind the nude boys who perch on river rocks
and invite the sun to their members,
a ring of girls, in tight black shorts and
pony tails, keep a coy but glancing distance.
And behind them all, a white-haired voyeur
drops his pants to masturbate.
The eyes of the Circle Line sail up river, still
hopeful that Becky Thatcher in eyelet bloomers
will wave a hanky from the shore.

VIII

In Undercliff Park, below Washington Bridge,
I play stretch and toe-knee-chest-nut with
my father's pocketed army knife.
A dangerous age. Threats are cutting through the air:
the flailing depantsings, the groping bra quests for
a wad of cotton or a nylon stocking.
A dangerous age, with the deadly fear
of being found a child.
To relieve it one day, we hang a tire in a tree and
swing in packs out over the cliff edge, until
the boy beside me loses grip and lies below,
as quiet as an infant in a lullabye.
Weeks later, we visit him at home, sign his casts
and giggle at his immature pajamas.
He lifts his mattress to show
an arsenal of thirty knives and ice picks,
and lets each girl pick a pocket lighter
shoplifted from Woolworth's.

IX

Hung by my hands above water,
I am dangled by boys from the ledge
of the Washington Bridge abutment.
Twelve years old, twelve feet from the surface,

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I do not trust boys, but love their giddy danger
like a windflaw teasing with a sail.
And while we dangle, the boys hurl rocks
at the river, waiting for the splash that will leap
up to our blouses and clutch the outlines
of our forming breasts.
Soaked through, we climb the naked limbs
of a shore tree and sprawl in the afternoon sun.
Above a boy hovers in the branches,
reaches for my hand a moment and is gone,
leaving something growing in me
that holds me separate from my friends
as we walk together to our fathers' houses,
wearing our secret scent of the river.

X

My husband no more swims b.a.
I can no longer picture his shadow
rippling across the sidewalks to the Harlem.
A swaggering, older boy, once unattainable.
Now at night I cradle his black hair
to my breast and we share the river's secrets:
My splashing joyride pick-up
with three strange boys in a motor boat.
His first hesitating touch of Dodie, the hillbilly
girl on the fourteen steps below Macombs Dam Bridge.
The tales of all those years I was not permitted
at The Harlem, unless my father stood beside me,
gathering me into his safe garden.
All those years I learned the route to avoid his path.
Now I retrace it in the dark, step by step, till
again I watch The Harlem Boat Club burn,
and see the steps plucked from the river bridge
where no child can again take the path
that leads me nightly to this good bed.
Kathy, did we escape our fathers?
Or did they plan our turns and detours
just carefully enough to lead us here?

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JEROME MAZZARO

Sushi/Sashimi

Watching you tackle that raw fish,
I image in the hardened bite
a shark devouring human flesh
or marlin snapping at fresh bait.

Five years ago I might have seen
a lovely young girl opposite,
ignoring food she'd settled on
for that warm glow our love gave out.

In those days who'd believe the eye
would fasten its vast appetites
on other morsels passing by,
devising reasons, trysts, and plots?

Or risk that vast array of pain—
the frantic calls or questioning
turning brief compromise and then,
retaliations sting for sting?

I feel my own still eager teeth
shunning a carrot, salmon, squid
to reach a whitefish underneath
some sticky sauce or edge of weed.

You dwell on monies I must pay,
pitting the income I'm to make
against our lives' necessity,
as if new food I'm forced to like.

The talk and tone so close the room
I itch just to be loose and run.
I know our sons need food and home
and keep my peace as you press on.

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Departing Buffalo

Beyond you, cornflowers bend
in the closed grip of a child's hand.
Cushioned in a father's arms,
she hums
as he moves toward the loading door,
gently reassuring her.

The oppressive heat outside
hurries them aboard,
quieting that fear of Romans setting sail:
goods stacked neatly near a wall,
prayers and a promised votive plaque
keeping them clear of shipwreck.

Stickers on nearby bags suggest, instead,
vistas—Stockholm, Athens, Baghdad—
you've put off learning of,
satisfied in grounding your life
in saws sure as the stiff blue dress
now paling your blue eyes.

A crash and skyjacking abroad
cloud what remains unsaid,
as you review our tasks.
Now willing to eye risks,
you smile and say goodbye and wave,
then, too, begin to leave.

A photograph completes the turn.
Wheels grow quaky from the starting engines.
The roar and force turn us about.
We scan the windows for a final sight,
knowing we're what you quit—
that gauged, resistant weight.

The surging plane grows wavy in the heat.

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Sunlight

Planing back, I see the dryness
under a greenery, hugging
close to moisture. Grass is
a wintry brown. Shrubs have
already charcoaled in the sun.
And, without your presence,
I begin for the first time
to feel that dryness,
as if your being—reminding
me of those hills and tall pines
we knew when we were younger—
prevented me from seeing what was real.

It is, however, from the lush mountains
of Oahu I return and at first
compare this dryness to, imagining
you at the same time flying East,
beginning to enjoy again
those pleasures of a various autumn.

Disembarking at Lindbergh, I feel
awkward in the crush moving
toward the baggage claim. A friend
waves distantly, yelling hello,
as I plan my ride to North Park
and our flat. I think of
the Boston fern we got from her
and watched so ardently just three years back.
The sun has killed so much.
Even the memory of the fronds seems false.

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JOHN O'BRIEN

Pictures of My Father

HE WAS A SHORT MAN with rust-colored hair and so they called him Red.

When I was about five, my parents took me back to their hometown, Piedmont, West Virginia. I'm not sure why we went back, but I think it had something to do with money. Piedmont means "foot of the mountain" and the town itself sits at the base of the Alleghenies and beside the Potomac River. It's a dirty mill town. Late on a Friday night we came around Shaft Necker Mountain on the B & O and my mother pointed Piedmont out to me. It was a cluster of lights way down the mountain. We got off the train at Keyser, five miles up the river, and found my grandfather waiting. He drove us to Piedmont. It was a quiet ride. I remember the sharp sulfide smell of the paper mill. Miles before we got into town we could smell it. (The mill's tall chimneys spewed yellow smoke into the air and the smell worked its way into houses and furniture and clothing and people too, some said. On damp days it was overpowering. People from up and down the river called Piedmont, "Stink Town," but Grandfather Neal, who owned part of the mill, always said, "Say what you will; it smells like money to me.")

We stayed in Piedmont for about a week and I was aware of the tension between my parents and grandparents. I don't remember whole conversations, but bits and pieces come back. On a certain day I was sitting in the backyard just under the kitchen window playing with a hammer. Voices drifted out the kitchen window.

"This will be the last time," my mother said. "We need just enough to pay for the baby and settle up a few things."

"Jessica," my grandfather said. "This is an old song and I've heard it before. I've heard it at least three times before."

"Daddy, I've explained already. You don't understand."

"What don't I understand," my grandfather said. "I under-

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stand a number of things. I understand that you spend my money. On what I can't say, but you spend it."

My grandfather got up from the table and stood beside the window.

"And I understand you're not going to get any more. Do you remember what you told me the day after you got married?"

"Let's stop this now," my grandmother said. "No need to go on like this. Where's the boy? Mrs. Lewis!" she called. (Mrs. Lewis was the housekeeper.) "Mrs. Lewis! Where's the boy?"

Mrs. Lewis came into the kitchen.

"I swear I don't know, Mrs. Neal. I haven't seen the little fella for an hour."

"Well, find him and find Mr. O'Brien while you're at it."

"And that's another thing," my grandfather said. "Why doesn't he ask me? Why is *he* always left out of this?"

"You know how he is," my mother said.

"I do not."

"Stop. Allen, stop this. It's a scandal to carry on so. I don't want the boy to hear."

I knew they were looking for me, but I didn't answer. Mrs. Lewis was going from room to room, muttering to herself the way she did. Finally she came to the kitchen door.

"Well, there he is," she said cracking her gum. "There he is smashing piss ants with Mr. Neal's ball peen hammer. Didn't you hear me calling, boy? Well, didn't you?"

My mother came to the door and stood there for a moment with her hands on her back. She was seven months pregnant, carrying my sister Patty.

"John," she said, "go around to the front and tell your father to take a walk with you."

She went back into the kitchen and got her purse and took a dollar from it.

"Here, give this to your father. Tell him to buy a loaf of bread and some milk."

I went around to the front and found my father sitting in the back seat of Grandfather's car. My mother came to the front door.

"Jim," she called. "Take John down to the Kroger Store and buy a loaf of bread."

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My father, as always, did as he was told.

I remember the walk down the street. It was a fine spring day, a week or so before Easter I think and the grass on the lawns we passed was already green. We passed the town firehouse and the men had the small hook and ladder out in front of the building and were polishing the chrome. They stared as we passed.

We didn't go to the Kroger Store but stopped in a small drug store and sat in a booth. My father ordered a cup of tea for himself and a Coke for me. We sat for a while and didn't talk. My father sipped his tea from a spoon and I drank my Coke and looked toward the back of the store. I remember a four bladed fan that hung down from the ceiling. It slowly churned up the air. There were two fly papers hanging down too and they were covered with dead insects. At the very back of the store was a fat man standing behind the prescription counter. He was staring at us. He stared for what seemed a long time and then finally came up and stood directly across from our booth. He fooled about, moving salt and pepper shakers on the counter, acting as if he were busy, but I could tell he was only getting a better look at us. Then he snapped his fingers and looked into my father's face. My father looked down into his tea. The fat man snapped his fingers again.

"Ah ha," he said, as if something had come to him.

"It's you, Red. It's really you."

My father looked up.

"Red O'Brien," the fat man said.

He stuck his plump hand out and took my father's hand and shook it vigorously. My father looked puzzled.

"Don't you remember me, Red?"

He put his hands out, palms up and closed his eyes and smiled, waiting for my father to recognize him. My father didn't say anything.

"It's me, Red. It's Piggy Amarosa. Don't you remember?"

"Sure I do. Sure I remember," my father said, smiling weakly.

Piggy looked relieved.

"Back in the old home town, eh Red. Gonna stay long?"

"No, just a visit."

"Where is it you moved to? New York? Isn't that it?"

"Philadelphia."

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"Oh, yeah, I remember now. Philadelphia, the big city. The big time."

There was a pause, then my father said, "The big time," in a funny way.

Piggy was trying to start a conversation, but my father obviously didn't want to talk. Piggy took his glasses off and cleaned them on the cuff of his shirt. I remember he wore arm garters and I had never seen them before.

"Well," he said, putting his glasses back on. "Well, here I am in the old man's store."

He stuck his arms out and closed his eyes, repeating the gesture he had made before. He really was very fat and his face was pink and fleshy and his hands were plump with fingers like little sausages.

"This your boy?" Piggy said.

"This is my son, John."

"Good-looking kid."

My father smiled at me. I finished my Coke, making a sucking sound with the straw.

"Virginia, bring this lad another Coke," Piggy said to the girl behind the counter.

"This one's on me, Red. I like kids. Want another cup of tea? It's on the house."

"No thanks."

The girl brought the Coke over. Piggy stood there looking for words.

"Yeah, I'm a home town boy," he said. "Won't get me out of Piedmont."

He smiled as if that were funny and my father smiled back.

"Say, Red, did you know I bought the Renner Place?"

My father shook his head.

"Oh yeah, bought it last year just after old lady Renner died. A funny thing, but I was thinking about you a while back. You know around last summer. Remember that big black cherry tree in the side yard?"

My father looked puzzled.

"Sure you do," Piggy said. "We used to hop that fence and pick that tree clean. It was always me and Whitey and Alex and Tom and you too.

"No, I don't remember that," my father said.

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"Ah, you old tom cat," Piggy said. "You Red Devil, you do too remember. You were always the first one over the fence."

My father shook his head. Piggy leaned close and put his hand on my head. He smelled like talcum powder. He ruffed my hair a bit and said, "Your old man's kidding me."

Then to my father, "Isn't that so, Red?"

My father didn't say anything and Piggy leaned close to him and whispered, "Whitey used to say we were the only ones to get old lady Renner's cherry. Ha! Tell me you don't remember that."

There was another pause.

"It must have been someone else," my father said.

Piggy looked confused and then he sighed.

"Yeah," he said, "maybe it was someone else at that."

"Well, we have to go."

My father handed the dollar to Piggy, but he wouldn't take it.

"It's on me, Red. On the house."

Then Piggy sat on the last stool at the counter and watched us go out. I think maybe he watched us go down the street too.

When we got back to my grandfather's house, things were quiet and I guess something was resolved. The rest of the visit went by. There were lots of quiet meals and some hurt looks and long silences. If we went for money, I guess we got it. Knowing my mother as I do and knowing a little about my grandfather, I feel sure we got the money. Of course, the important thing that came out of the trip was the quick look into my father's past that Piggy gave me. It was years before I thought of it, but when I did, it seemed so strange. You see, my father as I knew him was this defeated quiet person and I imagined that he had always been that way. But there must have been that boy that Piggy knew, the kid who was first to hop the fence and steal the cherries.

I made other trips to Piedmont, some with my parents, some alone. In fact, I spent a year in a town thirty miles up the river going to a community college. During that year I made several trips to Piedmont and found out other things about my father.

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He was from the *hill* part of town and not from the *flat* where the Neals lived. Mrs. Lewis, the housekeeper, was from the hills too. Sometime in 1941, in the fall I think, Grandfather Neal hired my father to tear down a shed in the backyard. I was told he paid my father two dollars a day and let him eat lunch in the kitchen. It took him two weeks to tear the shed down—a lot longer than anyone would have guessed and then a month and a half after that, my parents were married in the rectory of St. Peter's Church, the only Catholic church in town. Right after that, they took the night B & O to Washington, D.C. and a bus from there to Philadelphia.

On many nights when I was in Piedmont, I would hear the night B & O blowing to pass town and look up to see the train chasing its yellow light around Shaft Necker Mountain.

The first job he had after coming to Philadelphia was on the Delaware River docks. He worked the night shift for Gulf Oil and it was his job to attach the big hoses that drained the oil from the tankers. He once told me that the tankers would come up to his dock low in the water, but they would leave floating high after discharging all that oil. He also told me that for the six months he worked there all his food tasted and smelled like oil. You could never wash it away, he said. In the last month on the job he slipped and fell into the water and ended up with pneumonia. My mother said he almost died. From that time he developed this funny theory about men from the hills not being fit for work near the water. It doesn't make a lot of sense, but he figured it was unnatural for a hillbilly to work on the docks and that's why it almost killed him.

Next he worked in the General Electric factory and he kept that job for twenty-four years. In fact, he still works there. For twenty-four years he has been standing on an assembly line tightening two bolts on circuit breakers. It was always the same two bolts. He dreamed about doing it, he said.

After work he would come home and take his shoes off and sit on the couch to read his paper while we squeezed his feet. Patty and I usually did it together. He stood on a concrete

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floor for eight hours a day and his feet would get cramped and tired.

"I'm just like one of those fighters," he would tell us, "and this here is my corner and you guys are my trainers. You got to get me in shape to fight another round."

I remember him and his paper, *The Evening Bulletin.* He read every page every day and on certain days he read some parts twice. In the winter he took naps after dinner and would be there on the couch with the paper over his face. In the hot months he would go sit outside on the apartment steps and read his paper and sometimes drink a beer. Those were good nights because Patty and I could play out on the sidewalk for as long as he sat there. On a good many summer nights Mr. O'Kane from the floor above us came down with his paper, *The Inquirer*, and sat and talked with my dad. *The Inquirer* was Republican and so was Mr. O'Kane. He always tried to get my father into arguments by saying stuff like, "I tell you, Red, can't leave a thing lying around with all those Democrats in office."

My father just said "Yeah" or "I guess so" and never argued.

"Never argue about politics or religion or marriage," he often told me. "It only gets you in trouble."

I guess I was about six when he bought his first car. My mother told Patty and me he was going to bring it home one night and the three of us went down to the front steps to wait. After a bit he came down the street, driving slow. He didn't stop and as he passed, we waved and cheered and he blew the horn. He drove around the block four times and each time we cheered and cheered. The car was an old black Plymouth. I don't remember the year, but it was shaped like a box turtle and had a running board and the back seat was like an old overstuffed sofa. There was a chrome ship on the hood and that was good because the car was kind of like an old boat. For some reason we eventually named it Hannibal.

The family has owned lots of cars since then and I've owned a few myself, but none as great as the first one. I re-

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member that first night; we went for a ride along Parkway Drive. My mother sat close to my father and he kept saying, "We're not doing so bad. We're O.K."

My father never owned a suitcase or more than one suit at a time. He never traveled more than three hundred miles from Philadelphia.

For as long as I can remember there was the question of money. Sometimes they would come to take things from us. Once they took all the new living room furniture and lots of times they cut the electricity off. We would live by kerosene lamp. All the kids loved those times. It was like camping out. I remember one time my mother and the rest of us kids hid in the kitchen while a bill collector pounded on the door and yelled, "Mrs. O'Brien, I know you're in there. Mrs. O'Brien, I'm not going to leave."

We stayed in the kitchen for a long time and Mother kept telling us to be quiet. Finally the bill collector left.

Whenever we got into money trouble, my mother would say the electric company or the furniture store or the post office or someone lost her check to pay the bill. For a long time I believed that. It was the O'Briens against the world. Somebody was always screwing us. I'm sure my father knew, but he never said anything. He understood that my mother needed certain lies to get from day to day and he was wise enough not to tamper with her fiction. After all, she was a Neal.

When I was in fifth grade, I became an altar boy. My first mass was in the chapel of St. Vincent's Hospital, a home for unwed mothers. It was the early mass at six and both my parents got up with me. My mother cooked pig brains and eggs for my father because it was a special day. I couldn't eat because of communion fast so I drank water while my father ate. My mother ironed my new surplice, even though she had ironed it the night before. After breakfast they saw me off and said they were proud of me and were sorry they couldn't be at my first mass.

Of course, I was scared as hell and when I got out onto the

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altar, I forgot most of the Latin responses. My mouth dried up and it was hard for me to talk. When it came time for me to move the book from one side of the altar to the other, I got my foot caught in my cassock and tripped on the steps. I went down to one knee and almost dropped the book. The priest, Father Sullivan, was used to almost anything because all the new altar boys were tried out on him. He turned and caught the book and went on with mass as if nothing had happened. I was sure I heard a woman titter behind me and was glad my parents hadn't come. I had made such a fool of myself.

I got through the rest of mass and as we left the altar, I caught sight of my father going out the back door just behind a bunch of pregnant ladies. I remember seeing his brown lunch bag. It looked so out of place in the church. When I got into the vestry, I told Father Sullivan I was sorry and almost started to cry. He laughed a little and grabbed the hem of his own cassock to show me all the mended rips in it. He had tripped a few times himself, he said. Then he rubbed his hand in my hair and said I'd be a good altar boy at that.

That evening I told my dad I had seen him at mass. He blushed and said that he had been there. He shook his head and told me I was at least part O'Brien after all.

That's the way it was. The O'Brien side of the family was supposed to be clumsy and awkward and not very bright while the Neal side was supposed to be articulate and clever. They often told me I was a Neal and I used to take pride in that.

He used to make salt and pepper analogies at dinner time or sometimes after the meal. He would sit there at the table with the sleeves of his work shirt rolled up, drinking cup after cup of strong tea. The tea was almost black. He explained things to all the boys.

"See, this here's a man," he said, touching the salt shaker.

"And this is a woman," touching the pepper shaker or "This is a white man, this a nigger." Or "This is the boss, this the worker." Or Nixon and Kennedy or even God and man. The analogy would begin that way and weave on down in basic language between the shakers. Sometimes he would bring

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forks and knives and spoons into the analogy, but the main things were always the salt and pepper.

Whenever he spoke seriously to his sons, it was only to teach them not to "piss against the wind" or "get their hopes up too high." For him those two expressions contained all the wisdom of the world. He endured a lot of things and didn't expect much to happen.

Signs or words of affection always embarrassed my father. I guess I always knew he loved me, but he never actually said it. I can't remember him saying it once. He didn't touch me very often either. I remember one time when he did though. It was the first time he took me hunting. I slept in the center bedroom with five of my brothers and that one morning he came in before dawn to wake me. He didn't want to disturb the other boys so he gently laid his hand on the side of my face and whispered, "John, John. Come on boy, wake up."

One time there was a trucking strike in Philadelphia and among other things the evening papers were not delivered. My father got along without his paper for a few days, but it made him nervous and he didn't know what to do with himself for a few hours in the evening. The paper was still being printed and kids were going downtown to the printing office and buying papers and selling them for as much as a quarter each. I wasn't doing it because I had heard that the strikers had roughed up a few kids and taken all their papers.

This one day I went to meet my dad after work and as we walked home, he bought a paper from a black kid. Usually he respected strikes because he was a working man, but he missed his paper too much. Two men, strikers, I guess, were sitting in a car across the street, passing a bottle back and forth and when they saw my father buy the paper, they began to shout, "Scab! You fucking scab!"

My father tried to ignore them. As we walked the rest of the way home, they drove slowly behind us and called out, "Hey, Red, on the head like the dick on a dog. Hey, scab. You got red hair on your ass? Hey, Red, on the head . . . "

My father walked with his head down and his lips pressed

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together. When we got home, I asked him what a scab was and he told me and then read his paper.

There were ten children in the family, nine boys and one girl. I was special because I was first, but Patty was always my dad's favorite because she was a girl and had copper-colored hair. She was the only child with red hair and she was kind of shy just like Dad. I think he felt that she was more O'Brien than the rest of us.

I remember Sundays when we went to mass. Dad always had Patty sit next to him. It's funny about those Sunday Masses. We took up almost two pews and on those days Dad was proud of having what was called a "*good* Catholic family." Because of all the kids, money was always scarce, yet he never brought the "*good* Catholic family" and the money problems together. Being a Catholic was a matter of common sense to him and children came from God.

He had different ways of talking to different people. With a working man like himself he was relaxed and spoke freely, but with someone who wore a suit he was intimidated and shy. At GE where he worked only the bosses wore suits. Anyone in a suit made him feel inferior, even cops or postmen or door-to-door salesmen. I remember once he bought a set of encyclopedias that we didn't need and couldn't afford because the salesman wore a suit and implied that if he didn't buy them his kids would grow up to be dumb like him.

I only saw him drunk once. It was a Christmas Eve and we had a lot of whiskey and stuff in the house for the holidays. My mother was at work and would not be home till one or two in the morning. It was always that way. My mother worked in Tarenski's Department Store and Christmas Eve was a big night. Each year she promised my dad that it would be the last time she would work and with each Christmas we needed the money, so she would work. It would always upset my father because he wanted the family to be together on Christmas Eve.

So this one year he started drinking. He drank sweet rum and then whiskey. At first he was very happy and he called

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Patty his "beauty" and waltzed her all around the kitchen to some Christmas songs. He knocked two chairs over and broke the sugar bowl. Patty was afraid of him and ran upstairs. My dad stood at the bottom of the stairs and called for her to come down. She was crying in the bathroom. Then he wanted to go up and get her, but I wouldn't let him.

He tried to help decorate the tree and made a mess of the tinsel and broke some bells. I asked him to let me do it and he got angry and went out the back door and sat down in the middle of the yard. I tried to get him to come in, but he wouldn't. I went out to get him and ended up in a wrestling match on the frozen grass. Ricky, the youngest then, stood at the back door without a diaper on and clapped his hands and laughed.

I left my father in the yard and ran to Tarenski's and brought my mother back. She got him to come back in and both of them sat at the kitchen table. My father cried without making any noise. I took all the kids upstairs to bed.

In my last year of high school I read a story by D. H. Lawrence called "The Rocking Horse Winner." It was about a family that was haunted and there was this voice that kept whispering from the corners of the house:

"Money, Money. There must be more money."

I was overwhelmed by the story. I read it many times and even brought the book home so my father could read it. At first he didn't want to, but I insisted. He said that it was a crazy ghost story and that he didn't believe it. I think that's when I first thought about being a writer.

He came to visit me at college only once and it was the most mixed up visit I've ever had. It was the last day of the fall semester of my first year, and all the students were going home. That year I shared a big apartment with three other guys. They had left earlier that day. As it happened, two girls, friends of my roommates, stopped by the apartment to kill some time while waiting for the bus home. It was an hour and a half before departure and the bus station was only a block away. It was raining too and the bus station was a dismal place. By coincidence, the girls had to leave just as my

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parents came up the apartment building steps. There they were leaving my apartment with suitcases just as my parents came in. It never occurred to me that the old man thought something was up. He didn't say anything.

For the rest of the afternoon we sat around and talked and I made tea for my father. It was a miserably cold and rainy day. The other guys I lived with collected whiskey and wine bottles and had them in a row four deep on the top of the kitchen cabinet. My father was amazed and counted the bottles.

"Thirty-two," he said. "Thirty-two bottles. How long did it take you to drink that much?"

Later on Beck came down to the apartment. I introduced her as the girl I was in love with and it made my father feel awkward because he had not heard of her until then.

That evening I made spaghetti for dinner and I thought Dad was beginning to relax and enjoy himself. I could tell he liked Beck and he kept asking her questions about school and her home. One time Beck used the word periphery and Dad stopped her and asked her to repeat the word and tell him what it meant.

"Periphery, periphery," he repeated, "and it means the outskirts of something. That's a good word."

I knew he would use it on the guys at work. He always did that with a big word.

Things were pretty quiet for most of the evening. It was still raining and no one felt like going out so we sat around and drank beer and talked.

About nine o'clock some people started coming into the apartment down the hall. The guys who lived there belonged to a fraternity and they had been having a bachelor party at their house. I heard later that they were thrown out for getting out of hand. People kept coming up the steps and going down the hall. There must have been thirty people in that apartment. Then one of the worst evenings of my life began. Until early in the morning they made noise and generally raised hell and played a "Hot Nuts" album that had a refrain that went something like, "I drag my balls across the halls. I'm one of the sporting crew."

The apartments were all brick and tile and so the music

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and noise reverberated in the walls and rang down the hall. At first everyone acted as if they couldn't hear, but after a bit we gave that up. My father kept wincing and looked like he wanted to run away. My mother, who was always a calm person, just kind of accepted it.

The party got worse and worse. All the guys kept shouting together, "Who are we? We're the little *ras-cals*!"

And one guy yelled a few times, "Hey, Eddie! Eddie, my boy. Look, I'm sticking it out the window and I'm gonna fuck the *world*!"

I went down three times and told them my parents were in my apartment and asked if they would hold it down. Some of the guys knew me and they turned the record down. But within ten minutes it was back up again. The last time I went down a fraternity boy turned the record right back up when I turned it down. He smiled at me in a smug way.

"What's the matter, Sonny? Mommy and Daddy know all about it by now, and if they don't, it's time to learn."

I'm still sorry I didn't punch that guy in the mouth.

So we sat there sipping beer and not knowing what to say to one another. I tried to explain that this sort of thing didn't happen very often, but that didn't seem to help. Then a girl ran down the hallway and screamed right next to my window.

"You scabby bastard! If you touch me again, Allen will kill you!"

She leaned against the window, then went to the door and scratched on it.

"Let me in. Somebody let me in. I don't feel good."

Normally I would have opened the door, but I just couldn't that night. She left the door and we could hear her puking on the steps. My father kept saying that Patty would never go to college. He would shake his head and say, "I'll never let this happen to Patty. She'll stay home where she belongs."

I couldn't think of any way to salvage the situation so I took Beck back to the sorority house and came back and went to bed. My parents went to bed too. The noise kept me awake for a long time and I punched the wall and took the skin off my knuckles.

The next morning the guy from down the hall came into my apartment without knocking. He was naked except for a

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bath towel around his waist. He opened the door to my parents' bedroom.

"Whoops," he said. "I thought this was John's room."

"He's in the other room," I heard my mother say.

He opened the door to my room.

"Can I use your shower?" he asked. "There's some asshole sleeping in mine."

I told him he could. He closed the door, then opened it again.

"Hey, I'm getting fucking married. Did you know that? Today I'm fucking getting married."

A little after he got out of the shower we got up and made coffee and tea and got ready to go to mass. No one ate anything because of communion fast. It had stopped raining and it was one of those bright, winter days. At about 9:30 I called Beck to see if she was ready, then went to pick her up.

We went to St. John's Chapel. It was Beck's first mass and the priest talked about good non-Catholics and how they could make it in the back door of heaven if they were really too dumb to know about the Church. I went to communion with my parents, even though I hadn't been to mass for over a year and was not in a state of grace. I didn't want to let my parents down. It was odd but going to communion like that bothered me a little. I guess I hadn't quite lost all my religion.

After mass we walked back to the apartment. Dad walked behind Mother and me and he held Beck by the elbow and seemed to be talking very seriously to her. Later Beck told me that he stammered around and apologized for what the priest said about non-Catholics. Dad told her that he didn't think heaven had a back door and that he was sure she would make it. He also warned her about me.

Later that day I took them on a tour of the campus. I showed them the mall and the dorms and other buildings. When I pointed out Arnold Hall, the English Building, my father wanted to know which room was mine.

They left for Philadelphia that night. In the short time he was there, my father developed attitudes about college and about people that he would never lose.

When I was a sophomore in college, I went back to visit my

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parents in Philadelphia. I took the 11 trolley from Center City out to my mother's house. Of course, the old neighborhood had shrunk and it seemed dirty. On the second day at home I took Mother and Dad "out to dinner" because to my knowledge they had never done that and I wanted them to see how good I was at it. So we went downtown in the family station wagon, my father in his blue Sunday suit and my mother in the dress she had bought for my high school graduation.

The restaurant was called the "Pub Tiki" and it was one of those places where the waiters wear little red waist jackets. It was almost too dark to see and there was Muzak and lots of atmosphere. The head waiter gave us a table in the corner. My father sat straight up in his seat and my mother talked about "putting on the dog." I ordered for all of us. I ordered whiskey sours and did it so well that the waiter didn't ask about my age. All through the meal Dad was very polite to the waiter and he sat stiff up over his food and kept peeking up at me to make sure he wasn't doing anything wrong. He ate almost nothing.

When the waiter came to ask about dessert I ordered parfait. The waiter started to take the dinner plates and put them on a little push cart. As he reached for my father's plate, the old man half stood up and started to help scrape the food off. The waiter stood there and stared at him. So did I.

"Sit down, Jim," my mother said.

But my father stood a few seconds longer, then sort of laughed in a funny way and sat down.

We left and all the way home I wouldn't talk and my father kept saying, "I was just trying to help. I was only being helpful."

That night I lay in the center room on the bed I had as a kid. I could hear my parents talking low in the next room.

*

I saw my father two years ago, in late November, just after I got out of the hospital. I wanted to go home and I don't know exactly why. For some reason I felt that if I was going

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to rebuild myself, I should start at my father's house. I got into Philadelphia just at twilight. It was a depressing thing because the sky was pewter colored and heavy with rain and the weather and the look of things had a lot to do with how I felt back then. After the plane had taxied to a stop, I sat and stared at the people waiting by the gate in the green glow of the arch lamps. I saw my father standing there with his hands jammed into the pockets of his red plaid hunting coat and although I couldn't see his face clearly, I knew he was worried and depressed. Or maybe it was just a reflection of my own feelings. In any case, I knew then that the whole idea of coming home was wrong and if there had been some way to go back I would have. I sat there for a while and watched my father wait for me. Finally the stewardess came to my seat.

"You have to get off now, Sir," she said.

I turned to look at her.

"It's the end of the line," she said.

I stood up, took my small bag from the floor, and got off. As soon as my father saw me, he came out the gate and walked toward me.

"There you are," he said, taking my hand. "I thought maybe I had the wrong flight."

He looked down at my bag.

"Let me take that."

He reached down and took the bag, and we walked back to the terminal.

"Yes," he repeated, "I thought I had the wrong flight."

"It was the right one," I said.

We walked the rest of the way to the terminal without speaking. Inside the terminal was very bright and full of people bumping into one another and it made me think of the day room, and I felt lightheaded because of the buzzing of conversation and the metallic sound of the woman on the intercom announcing arrivals and departures. I felt nauseous and my face blanched.

"Are you O.K.?" my father said.

"What?"

"I said, 'Are you O.K.?' You look sick."

"I'm all right. I think I'm a little airsick."

"Oh," he said.

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By the time we got to the car, it was raining gently and the cold drops on my face made me feel better. He unlocked his side first, got in, then leaned over to unlock my side. We started home. The rain began to fall faster and I watched the drops splatter against the window, then be swept away by the wiper. It had a hypnotic effect and I let myself go with it. The silence in the car was charged, like the silence between two songs on a record album.

"You haven't said a thing since we got in the car," my father said. "How come you're so quiet?"

"I don't know," I said. "Nothing to talk about right now."

"How are you?"

"I don't know."

He turned the radio on and tuned it in to a familiar station.

"That's your station isn't it?" he said.

"It used to be."

There was the same excited D.J. screaming all that flip fast talk. My father hated that station. I had a dozen images of myself in high school.

"Are you still writing those stories?" he said.

"I haven't written one for a long time."

"Why not? Are you giving up that writing stuff?"

"No. I just took a rest."

"That's good," he said. "You always worried too much about those stories."

I looked over at him. He shrugged his shoulders.

"Look," he said. "You and I will have a few good times—maybe go hunting. We'll drink a little and have a few good times. Then you'll be O.K."

He smiled weakly. I watched him and could tell how worried he was and it came to me again that I should never have come. I was feeling very guilty and could feel myself sinking into depression. I tried then to fix my mind on something good so I could pull myself up, but I couldn't find a single good thing to think of.

"I'm taking the rest of the week off from work so you and I can do a few things together."

"You didn't have to do that."

"I know," he said. "I wanted to. I don't get the chance to

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see you very often. Besides I need a rest too. It'll do us both some good."

We turned down the old street and went slowly past the neighborhood houses. I saw the yellow light pouring from the windows into the rain. We couldn't find a space by the house so we had to park two blocks away and walk back to the house. The rain had let up temporarily. I remember the dead leaves sticking to the wet sidewalk and how awful the bare black trees looked. There was dirty water running in the gutters and the black streets were shiny and gave back the street lights. I don't know why, but I noticed all those things on the way to the house and they seemed somehow very important. They still do.

I shook hands with all my brothers and kissed my mother and felt so lightheaded that I had to sit down.

After dinner I washed the dishes because I wanted to have something to do. My father closed the kitchen door and went down to the basement and returned with a bottle of bourbon. He set the bottle on the table.

"Look here," he said. "I got the kind you drink. Isn't this your brand."

"Sure," I said. "You remembered."

He took a tray of ice from the refrigerator and put cubes into glasses.

"Let's see," he said. "You drink yours straight. Right?"

"With water."

"Right, with water."

He came to the tap and put water in both glasses, then went back and poured the bourbon.

"Come sit down," he said. "Have a drink with your old man."

"You're not my old man," I said. "You're my dad. I could never think of you as my old man."

He blushed.

"Well, come sit near me anyway."

"I'll finish the dishes."

"Let that go. It's time for a drink."

"I'm almost done," I said.

I began to hurry and in my haste I ran my finger against a butcher knife in the water. I brought my hand out and

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looked at my finger. The cut was deep and bleeding very fast. I stared at it. Blood ran down over my hand and onto my shirt.

My father looked up.

"Hey," he said. "What did you do?"

He came over to me.

"Cut myself," I said.

He looked at my finger with great concern. He touched my hand and I looked into his face.

"It looks bad," he said. "Maybe we should go to the hospital and get it fixed."

"I'll wrap it," I said.

I took the dish towel and wrapped it around my finger.

"Let's have that drink," I said.

We sat down and sipped our drinks. He was not used to drinking and was having a hard time swallowing, but he wanted to drink the way I did.

My finger was soaking the towel and throbbing with pain.

"This whiskey isn't going down right," I said. "Do you have any coke?"

"We have ginger ale."

"That would be good," I said.

We mixed the whiskey with ginger ale.

By the time the whiskey was half gone, my father was drunk, but he still had things under control. My mother came out to the kitchen and looked at us and at the bottle, then walked out. My father looked at the door.

"Your mother don't like me to drink," he said.

"I know," I said.

"She don't understand."

"Neither do I," I said.

He looked at me.

"Me neither," he said.

We sat for a while.

"Where's my sister?" I said.

"Who knows?" he said. "I can't keep up with her. She just comes and goes as she pleases. She's in with a bad crowd. I think she hates me."

"No one could hate you."

His lower lip trembled and his eyes filled with water.

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"She told me she hated me."

We sat without speaking.

"Well," he finally said, "this is no way to celebrate your being home. Let's talk. So you don't write anymore."

"Yes, I do. I'm just taking a break."

"What do you write about?"

"Me," I said, "and people."

"Do you write about sex?"

"Sometimes."

"I was afraid of that," he said. "I was afraid you were a dirty writer."

"I'm not a dirty writer," I said. "Would you like to read some of my stories?"

He looked down at his hands.

"No, I'd better not. I wouldn't understand them anyway."

There was a long silence.

"I wrote a story about you," I said. "I haven't finished it yet, but I started it."

"About me?"

"Yes."

"What about me? I mean, I go to work and come home and that's all I do."

"That's enough."

"What's my story about?"

"Just about you and how you were when I was a kid and about the quiet kind of dignity and understanding that it took me so long to find in you. And about how much I love you."

He turned his head away and flushed deeply. I could see the color rising in his neck.

"You remember that time I took you and Mother out to eat?"

"You didn't write *that* in my story, did you?"

"Yes."

"Oh no," he said. "You can't put that in a magazine. What if somebody at work was to read that. Everyone would see how dumb I am."

"You're not dumb. I was the dumb one. You know something?"

"What?"

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"If I had it to do over, I'd help you clear the table. I'd help you scrape the plates. I was the dumb one."

He flushed once again.

"I have to go to the bathroom," he said and got up.

When he came back, he had trouble looking at me.

"The whiskey's gone," he said.

I shrugged.

"Want to go to a bar?"

"If you want to."

We went out and walked two blocks to a place on the corner called "McGinty's." It had started raining harder and we got good and wet on the way. "McGinty's" was a small neighborhood bar that was dark and beery and half full of working men. Many of them still had their work clothes on and had the sleeves of their rough shirts rolled up to the elbow just as my father had. There were men sitting at tables and at the bar and a few playing one of those bowling games. We took places at the bar and the bartender came over.

He sat a bottle of "Iron City" on the counter.

"What's the word, Red?" he said.

"Hi, Frank," my father said.

"What you want?" Frank said to me.

"Brandy," I said. "On ice please."

"Apricot or peach?"

"Just brandy," I said.

"You mean plain brandy," he said.

"Yes. On ice."

"I'll have one too," my father said.

"Don't you want that beer?" Frank said.

"I'll drink it," my father said.

I put a ten-dollar bill on the counter, but my father put it in my shirt pocket. I didn't want to argue about it.

We had two drinks. My father kept shifting around on his stool and looking back over his shoulder.

"It's not much of a bar," he said. "Just a place for guys like me to come in and have a drink. It's not a fancy place."

"It's a nice bar," I said. "I like this kind of bar."

"You do?"

"Sure," I said. "It's a nice bar. It's just like the neighborhood."

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"You like the neighborhood?"

"Yes."

"You didn't used to."

"I've changed."

"You have?"

"Yes, I have."

We had a few more drinks and sometime in there it came to my father that the big evening was not coming off, but he didn't give up. He talked a lot and tried to make jokes and insisted we play the bowling game. He was very drunk, but he couldn't lose and I couldn't win, no matter how hard he tried to give me the game. He faked a lot of enthusiasm and bet on the outcome of the games.

He went into the men's room and was gone for a long time. After he had been gone for a half hour, I went in to look for him and could hear him in the stall throwing up. I stood at the door and listened to him heave and heave and was struck with hopelessness.

I left him there and sat back at the bar. When he came out, he sat back down beside me and said, "Let's have another round."

"I'm kind of tired," I said. "How about going home?"

"If you want to," he said.

It was after one then and we left "McGinty's" and it was still raining. I had to help my father home. He had trouble getting up and down the curbs.

When we got home, the house was quiet and dark. I let my father lie down on the couch and covered him with a coat. I lay down on the floor and began to cry. I could feel my heart beating in my cut finger. I was overcome with a strange sense of déjà vu.

I have been here once before. I have thought these thoughts before.

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JOHN HOLLOWAY

Sleeping and Waking

Although I watch it nightly as you sprawl
inert, mumbling, what sleep can really be
is beyond me. You neither hear nor see:
I watch your breath—a rise, a fall,
no faster and no slower than waves breaking,
and I drowze, ignorantly . . . but, what about waking?

occurs to me . . . is that as plain as day?
It bustles round the house, yet ocean-deep
although not one, and ponderous, like sleep,
but various, myriad, light—some sunlit spray
that dazzles almost as if sight were blindness.
And then I think of just two things: kindness

and gratitude in mutual esteem.
The second of them is my prerogative
because the other one is what you give
out into daylight in a steady beam
until—well, it's all heavenly . . . although daily.
Absurd! Yet, to starry-eyed folk, who gaily,

in spacious trance, pontificate and peer
in all directions, mostly at the sky,
in quest of the unearthly, my reply
is down to earth: it's here
. . . there . . . and everywhere. Rather like mortar
between brickwork. A daylight like plain water.

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Sunbathing Talk

As we lie here, living slowly
in this heat like amber, simple sea of light,
talk to me about what does not move.
Stone. Or a core. Something
righted and rooted. The earth's core

. . . but no. That spins. Then a steadfast
and constant mind, say. Made always
(you remind me) by growing . . . a rock remnant
self-remade always against
some chasm backward. What is nearest, then,

to unmoving? Surprise. Light is what
I think. This light itself. Simple
sea without top or stop. Who has
ever seen it move? Heard
the sound of its coming? Yet it is here and

you name it, there also. Edgeless, unshaped,
but from the first *fiat*
all luck and luxury. As now, from sun
to our still skin. And tonight, blandly,
blankly, will spread, blackly, back to

those racing stars, you can see a world
of it, the photon ocean of it,
a boundless bounty . . . and as our talk
begins to light up, quickest is slowest
also, I think (falling silent an

age or moment) of nothing less than
poems growing, their
still journey from I don't know to I
don't know, their photosynthesis and dazzling
universality, primordial enlightenment.

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Singing Is Believing

What is before me. Not
midget, multifarious and always
debatable: I have in mind something
enormous, and intact. Yes,

I have, always, in mind
a thing almost wordless: which is from
being serene. Yes, being, serene
as truly it is; and

for those past masters (past
mistresses also) who tell you there is no such object,
only names, consider any bird that,
unwinging its eyes at first

stringendo failing of dark,
will deluge the garden with song. Seeing,
to his wordless way, immediately, being,
simply, believing . . . as

with me also, drowsing
in familiar dreams, and warmth, when that
cataclysm of music breaks rondo-wise into
reality, renewed

at that point when everything
archaic, and of always, shouted out, stands
confirmed, and everything renewed is nothing, but
being renewed.

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BARRY SPACKS

Poem in Search of Its Subject

for Shelley Nameroff

No subject exists, the roshi tells us,
  pointing at the moon.
There's pointing, yes, and the study of moonlight
  reflected in the waters—but *you?*
No you. You're just the name for a story
  profound in the space between tick and tock.
Then disappear, into stillness and motion.
  Consider the frog, how he heavily sits,
how wicked the fling of his tongue!
  Or the flowers of ocean, the porpoises, whales:
exactly like essence they give themselves over.

*

The poem pretends it's a fling of the tongue,
  it's passing as human, it acts like a man
in a sinking boat who bails by hand,
  no oars or sail or charted plan,
nattering on that he loves the sea.

*

Ah, let the boat sink, the sages say.
  Grow gills, why not? you had them once.
You've wanted to dive in any case,

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by shark's back slim into sandlit caverns,
brilliant coral and parrot fish.

*

Tongue and boat disappear. You're left
as a pointing finger, two sisters beside you
large and scary, the little one frail,
and that devious misshapen genius your thumb,
what does *she* intend? And the wrist! The arm!
O body, o little hand, save me
from narrowed sight! I'm as *everything*
as a wave is composed of the sea, though a dream
of self casts a shadow on my day
which is neither the gull, nor the hover of flight,
nor the moonlight.

In the Garden at Midnight

Do trees ever sleep? The flowers close,
and the lawn lies down with the moon to dream,
and you and the other animals
drift through the dark with your totems . . . but leaves,

in the stillness the leaves of the trees seem to wait,
absolute in the garden at midnight,

as if in the dark still they breathe the light.

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Local Color

1.

The light's only seen
in local color.

May your fine glance
not fade.

Coffee and morning,
out on the gallery . . .

your intricate sadness
passes away.

2.

Nothing's more large than light, more kind;
more swift at its work, this constant defining.

We'll drive from L.A. to Boston soon,
or maybe fly. The light makes the trip

in one five-thousandth-second, the light,
so still, that waits all about you now,

that yields to your slightest
motion . . . how humble

it seems. Like space in a drawing. How careful.
How calm.

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ROBERT SWANSON

Looking at a Painting of Constantinople by Paul Signac

The minarets spire vaguely through a mosaic
of small shells of paint: like oyster-shells,
mussels, abalone. But these odd, green waters

have no odor, no dark movement under the surface.
When we step back from the canvas, the shells
blur, fade, become a sea-mist, through which we

see the unreal city. Boats without oarsmen,
yachts without tillers, mosques without muezzins.
Any sound we could hear over these waters would

seem like a sigh. This sea is not a sea, with
foam and wave, but a gauzy veil taking on the
light of green yachts, the reflection of white

minarets, grey domes, beige walls. And the city
is not a haven we reach after a pleasant voyage;
but a mirage we gaze at, starving, thirsting.

If I step back far enough, it's green haze, white
smoke. I'm lost. I'm lying down. Sea-sick.
On the ferry-boat from Yalova to Istanbul. The

walls of the cabin tilt down, then rise up, tilt
down, then rise up. The faces of my friends,
oblique, are strangers; are doctors surrounding

a puffed-up bed. "Would you like some water?"
"Some orangeade?" "Some lime juice?" The walls
tilt down, rise up. The portrait of the captain

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on the wall looks like Conrad, though a Turk.
"It's very bad to throw up on a Turkish ship.
They make you clean it up." I hear a laugh

chasing those words across the dry floorboards.
I look for a face. It's Lester. He's brought
me a Pepsi. "Where'd you find that?" "A little

'abi' had it. Only a quarter." I sit up. Motion
Lester to sit down. The wood of this bench is worn,
old, warm. The ship creaks as it moves, in its slow

trough of water. I feel OK. The captain looks like
Signac. He's able. He knows his business. Bright
bells. A slowing. We're coming in to Istanbul.

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KRASSIN HIMMIRSKY

The Cricket

In vain we tried to banish him.
The roar of engines did not drive him away,
nor the asphalt with which we covered the fields.
We put up steel fences, walls of cement
and concrete.
Darkened the air with gas fumes
and shut ourselves in highrise buildings.

But he, like a password,
crossed every barrier unharmed.

And when we claimed victory
in the shade of a leaf, unseen
his fine string music started again.

Its tone reeled off our forgotten friends,
our forgotten homes,
our souls.
It recalled to mind
the world's forgotten beauty.

Then we looked for him,
meaning to speak in friendship at last,
but in vain.

He was nowhere visible.
And only within us
still rang and rang his refrain.

[*Translated from the Bulgarian by Denise Levertov*]

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MARVIN MUDRICK

The Contents of Case No. 794

If ever somebody may be said to have attracted to himself by his own efforts, without the aid of a sect or an army or a political cause or office, the fascinated attention of the Western world, as likely a choice as any would be P. T. Barnum. In 1855 Barnum was forty-five, the most successful showman ever, more famous than the prodigies by whose exhibition he had long since made himself the biggest of them all, a front-page celebrity on both sides of the Atlantic and on both a deferentially courted guest of the high and mighty (no doubt they were curious about somebody at the top who had started from scratch)—kings, queens, presidents, and so forth. He had already conceived and managed every phase and motion of the two most heralded and most profitable tours in the history of show business, General Tom Thumb's and Jenny Lind's. It was fourteen years since he had established on Broadway in the heart of Manhattan Barnum's American Museum, the temple of man, the first church of random and edifying entertainment: e.g. a huge "Lecture Room" in which the customers were offered not only lectures on topics of the day but pantomime, concerts, jugglers, ventriloquists, "American Indians, who enacted their warlike and religious ceremonies on the stage," a resident stock company's performances of such plays as *Passion and Repentance* and *The Drunkard*, beauty contests (the first ever), "Baby Shows," The Bearded Lady; elsewhere in the building "a fortune-teller, . . . an enormous tank in which at times swam two whales from Labrador that had cost Barnum thousands of dollars to transport, . . . a fat girl, the lightning calculator [a man, not a machine], the living skeleton, automatons, rope-dancers, dioramas of giantesses and dwarfs, . . . an exhibit of glassmaking, wax figures of Napoleon, Victoria, Tom Thumb, Christ and his disciples, . . . contortionary mirrors," Ned the trained seal; the "Happy

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Family, [which was] a collection of monkeys, dogs, rats, cats, pigeons, owls, porcupines, guinea pigs, cocks" et al. living in symbolic as well as actual peace together; a more conventional menagerie; and "Who can forget, be he man or boy," reminisced a New York *Times* editorial writer, "the startling effect produced upon him when first he came upon the Three Men of Egypt, whose blackened skulls and grinning, ghastly faces stuck offensively out from the top of the funeral wrappings?"; five floors of the world's No. 1 repository of unauthenticated and unassimilable information, secular relics and marvels guaranteed to induce solemn thoughts as when in proximity to the contents of Case No. 794:

> "Ball of Hair found in the stomach of a sow; Indian collar, composed of grizzly bear claws; the sword of a sword fish penetrating through the side of a ship; an Algerine boarding pike; African pocket-book; Chinese pillow; a petrified piece of pork, which was recovered from the water after being immersed for sixty years; fragments of the first canal-boat which reached New York City through the canals; wrought metal Mexican stirrup; Turkish shoes; African sandals," and a host of other items. The cases nearby contained coach lace from Washington's carriage, a box made from the wood of the tree under which Penn ratified his treaty with the Indians, a portion of the throne of Louis XVIII, a buckle belonging to Peter Stuyvesant, a key to the Paris Bastille, antiquities from Herculaneum, Indian peace pipes, South Sea masks, and Buddhist images from the Far East.
>
> The catalog sought to teach a little cultural relativism along with its information. "However uncouth these unsightly and miserable attempts at sculpture appear to the inhabitants of civilized nations," it declared, speaking of Asian idols, "they are highly revered and valued at home, where they receive the worship and adoration of millions of ignorant Heathen."[1]

Hours: daily from sunrise to 10 P.M., all of it for the price of twenty-five cents, two bits, the fourth part of a dollar. Already within a year of the Museum's opening Barnum was having to calculate how to keep the customers moving through and out, because there was such a plethora of things to see that many brought their families and meals and spent the day jamming the interior from wall to wall or at least

[1] HUMBUG: The Art of P. T. Barnum, by *Neil Harris*. Little, Brown. $10.00.

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from case to case while the unadmitted milled about disconsolately in the street outside; during one such deadlock Barnum pushed through the mob from floor to floor till he emerged on the roof: "Looking down into the street," he recollected, "it was a sad sight to see the thousands of people who stood ready with their money to enter the Museum. . . . It was exceedingly harrowing to my feelings." Maybe a new exit would help; he had it cut through the rear wall, and the next St. Patrick's Day, hemmed in by a surplus of Irish, tried to talk one of them into using it:

> I espied a tall Irish woman with two good-sized children [children were admitted at half price and the more sizable took up a good deal of space] whom I had happened to notice when they came in early in the morning.
>
> "Step this way, madam," said I politely, "you will never be able to get into the street by the front door without crushing these dear children. We have opened a large egress here and you can pass by these rear stairs into Ann Street and thus avoid all danger."
>
> "Sure," replied the woman, indignantly, "an' I'm not going out at all, at all, nor the children aither, for we've brought our dinners and we are going to stay all day."

From further inquiries among them Barnum learned that "pretty much all of my visitors had brought their dinners" and meant to "make a day of it"; "the building was overcrowded, and meanwhile hundreds were waiting at the front entrance to get in when they could." Wandering backstage "biting my lips with vexation," he noticed a scene-painter at work and "a happy thought struck me: 'Here,' I exclaimed, 'take a piece of canvas four feet square, and paint on it as soon as you can, in large letters—TO THE EGRESS.' "

> Seizing his brush he finished the sign in fifteen minutes, and I directed the carpenter to nail it over the door leading to the back stairs. He did so, and as the crowd, after making the entire tour of the establishment, came pouring down the main stairs from the third story, they stopped and looked at the new sign, while some of them read audibly: "To the Aigress."
>
> "The Aigress," said others, "sure that's an animal we haven't seen," and the throng began to pour down the back stairs . . .

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—and out into Ann Street, while at the other end of the building "I began to accommodate those who had long been waiting with their money at the Broadway entrance."[2]

Barnum had tricks but no secrets; showmanship wasn't a game you lost by showing how it was played; he enjoyed acknowledging to the public (after the fact) the hoaxes with which he had shaken out their small change: not to taunt them but so that he could share with them his delight in being the master of his trade, for example when he put over on them his two earliest public sensations—"Joice Heth," an elderly black woman he exhibited as a 161-year-old slave who had been the nurse of the infant George Washington; and the "Fejee Mermaid" (before buying which Barnum consulted a naturalist, who declared it sight unseen a fake; when Barnum asked him why he thought so, "Because I don't believe in mermaids," he replied), upper half of a mummified monkey sewn to the lower half of a dried fish. Thus in 1855, after fourteen years of uninterrupted world-beating successes, rich, honored, accepted, secure, he set everything down without malice, indeed with perfect good humor, in *The Life of P. T. Barnum, Written by Himself*: "It will be seen that I have not covered up my so-called 'humbugs,' but have given a full account even of such schemes as 'Joice Heth,' the 'Fejee Mermaid,' and the 'Woolly Horse.' " One of Barnum's earliest discoveries was that all publicity, friendly or hostile, was good for business; at any rate he wasn't easily upset by potshots and moralizing; nevertheless he must have had a few bad moments with the tone and temper of numerous reviews on both sides of the Atlantic: "Nothing in this book is more remarkable than the obvious insensibility of Mr. Barnum to the real character of its disclosures. He takes an evident pride in the boldness and enormity of the impositions by which he has amassed his fortune. . . . The book will be widely read, and will do infinite mischief" (New York *Times*); "How much of Mr. Barnum's revelations is to be believed, and how much of them is sheer lies and moonshine? That is the question. Who shall say that when this autobiographical spec. has served its

[2] STRUGGLES AND TRIUMPHS, or, Forty Years' Recollections of P. T. Barnum, ed. *Carl Bode.* Penguin. $4.95p.

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purpose, and brought the anticipated addition of dollars to the showman's coffers, another volume may not be forthcoming in which the writer shall renounce all claim to the nauseous depravity in which he has thought fit to clothe himself in this book?" (*Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*); "Mr. Phineas Taylor Barnum is, we are thankful to say, not a native of this country. . . . We have not read, for a long time, a more trashy or offensive book than this. . . . He has left nothing for his worst enemy to do; for he has fairly gibbeted himself. No unclean bird of prey, nailed ignominiously to the door of a barn, can present a more humiliating spectacle than Phineas Taylor Barnum, as he appears in his autobiography" (*Blackwood's Magazine*).

Infinite mischief? nauseous depravity? unclean bird of prey? and all on live exhibition in a building on Broadway for the price of a quarter. In 1847, back from his European tour with Tom Thumb, Barnum had been "surprised to find" that he was now "a curiosity" himself:

> If I showed myself about the Museum or wherever else I was known, I found eyes peering and fingers pointing at me, and could frequently overhear the remark, "There's Barnum." On one occasion soon after my return, I was sitting in the ticket-office reading a newspaper. A man came and purchased a ticket of admission. "Is Mr. Barnum in the Museum?" he asked. The ticket-seller, pointing to me, answered, "This is Mr. Barnum." Supposing the gentleman had business with me, I looked up from the paper. "Is this Mr. Barnum?" he asked. "It is," I replied. He stared at me for a moment, and then, throwing down his ticket, exclaimed, "It's all right; I have got the worth of my money"; and away he went, without going into the Museum at all!

Eight years later the critical reaction to his autobiography must have been another surprise, because eventually he bought back the plates and destroyed them, and in 1869 published a new version under a new title, *Struggles and Triumphs,* with the events of his career carried up to date, but certain details of the original deleted or laundered—such as his gleefully specified implication in the mermaid hoax and his touching up of the age and birthplace of Tom Thumb (who when Barnum discovered him had been five years old, not eleven, and born not in England but in the United States). He

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kept updating, revising, and reissuing this version annually till two years before his death (he died in 1891): it was said by Barnum to have sold more than a million copies by 1888; whatever the figure, social historians affirm that, next to the Bible, *Struggles and Triumphs* was the most widely read book in the United States during the nineteenth century.

Yet till 1855 Barnum's life as he told it, and as in truth it seems to have been, was many a triumph and nary a struggle, a hero's progress without trials, an appetite that could digest with relish and mustard the contents of Case No. 794, a circus torchlight parade of elephants, fancy riders, clowns, bedizened wagons, marching bands, rolling cages of lions and tigers in endless procession through city streets lined with noisy festive crowds the night before the opening (greatest of all indefinitely repeatable publicity stunts, which twenty years later he would dream up together with the very idea of the circus of our dreams and childhood together with its immortal name, "The Greatest Show on Earth": pack them in under a single grand canvas which "seats thirty thousand persons, and is filled twice each day"; give them not one or two but *three* rings of simultaneous action plus the outer ring for Roman chariot races, all of which would not only dazzle them with superfluity—some of it close enough to be visible to the naked eye—but lure them back another time for all they missed; then by the numbers dismantle the whole shebang and spirit it by rail overnight to the next town on the itinerary in a miracle of logistics which war-college generals would come from around the world to study). That carefree first version of an American life was the Alger novel Horatio didn't write and much better than those he did, but it had hubris in it too. Taking notice at last, Nemesis whacked Barnum's broad shoulders with a railroad tie, frowned on his wit, deprived him (temporarily) of his luck, and forced him to depend (for a while) on grit and pluck instead.

Barnum wasn't a businessman. "The fact is," he wrote to a correspondent long before the sky fell, "I am not, nor never was half so cute, nor cunning, nor *deep* as many persons suppose"; and on March 20, 1856 he said it again in bankruptcy court: "Q. You stated in your examination yesterday, that you were the poorest kind of business man. Do you mean to con-

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vey the impression that you are *non compos mentis*? A. I mean to say that I do not understand the details of accounts and a credit business; my business has always been a cash business—'pay before you go in'—I never knew the meaning of the expression 'bills payable' until within a year." His proposal to Jenny Lind, "the Swedish Nightingale," for an American tour included a pledge to deposit the sum of her fees and expenses for the one-year tour, plus the fees and expenses of her conductor and her supporting male singer, in her English bank account before they left Europe: $187,500 (about two and a half million in 1982 dollars); when she accepted, Barnum raised the money "by converting everything he owned to cash, taking out mortgages on all his property, and finally relying on a personal loan from a friend." The day of her arrival in New York she was greeted, chiefly as a consequence of his tireless advertising and hundreds of planted "news" stories, by tens of thousands who probably weren't matched for hysterical adulation till Lindbergh's return from Paris; in their first words Barnum (having counted the crowd) told her he was altering the contract in order to double her fees to $2000 (in Barnum-era dollars, as will go without saying from here on; multiply it by twelve and a half or more to turn it into 1982 dollars) per concert, and that was how it came out for the ninety-three concerts of her tour. Of course Barnum cleaned up too; in his autobiography he proudly included the complete financial statement; but he was never a penny-pincher, money was indispensable but minor, money was what greased the wheels of opportunity. The Duke of Wellington often called at Tom Thumb's "public levees" in London, which were costly and dignified affairs arranged to attract the high and mighty, and, as Barnum's luck of the early years would have it, the first time the Duke appeared Tom was doing his Napoleon impersonation, with familiar costume, mannerisms, etc., "marching up and down the platform, and apparently taking snuff" in a posture of profound thought: Tom was twenty-five inches tall. "I introduced him to the 'Iron Duke,' who inquired the subject of his meditations. 'I was thinking of the loss of the battle of Waterloo,' was the little General's immediate reply. This display of wit was chronicled throughout the country, and was itself worth

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thousands of pounds to the exhibition." Money was the means of validating the present fabulous project while preparing the way for the next, it was the rainbow bridge to another crowd-pleaser. Barnum the Connecticut Yankee, proverbial shrewdest type among the shrewd Yankees, was a dreamer besides, a kind of materialist visionary. In the 'fifties he began buying unimproved land east of Bridgeport, about forty miles from the town where he'd been born, with the aim of developing it into a model community: he made low-interest loans to those who bought lots and built houses; he tried to persuade light industries to resettle there, for instance the Jerome Clock Company, in return for whose promise to come in he lent them what he thought was a maximum of $110,000 but kited within months into more than five times that amount—enough to bankrupt him—by the time the company's mealy-mouthed swindlers were finished with their easy mark and had finished off their own company. Five years later, after a satisfactory quota of the struggles indicated in his second title, he was solvent again and back in charge of the Museum (where attendance had plummeted as might be expected), before whose first audience—a capacity audience as might be expected—he stood up and gave a frank and rueful account of his ruin and recovery: "I was perusing protests and summonses by day, and dreaming of clocks run down by night. My head was ever whizzing with dislocated cog-wheels and broken main-springs; my whole mind (and my credit) was running upon tick, and everything pressing on me like a dead weight." Barnum was a typical nineteenth-century reader—Shakespeare, Dickens, the Bible—and he rose to an apologia not unworthy of any of them: "Many people have wondered that a man considered so acute as myself should have been deluded into embarrassments like mine, and not a few have declared, in short metre, that 'Barnum was a fool.' I can only reply that I never made pretensions to the sharpness of a pawn-broker, and I hope I shall never so entirely lose confidence in human nature as to consider every man a scamp by instinct, or a rogue by necessity." His "off-hand speech," Barnum reports, "was received with almost tumultuous applause." What charming modesty in that "almost"! It ought to go without saying that he re-

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sumed the East Bridgeport project till it had become a functioning municipality: then saw to its incorporation into the old town, and in the 'seventies served an active term as mayor of greater Bridgeport.

Maybe he didn't treat money as respectfully as he should have, but he knew how to spend it. While on tour in England with Tom Thumb, Barnum

> had been impressed by the oriental magnificence of the royal pavilion at Brighton, built by the prince regent, later George IV. He determined in 1846 to build an American version and commissioned drawings. Work began on a seventeen-acre site in Bridgeport while he was still in Europe, and it continued until the housewarming in November 1848.
>
> Iranistan, as the new home was called ("Eastern Country Place" was Barnum's definition), immediately became one of the sights of New England, a fantastic multiturreted oriental palace surrounded by gardens and fountains, filled with rosewood, marble, velvet, and lace. Its Middle Eastern opulence astonished eyes used to the severities of Georgian homes or the restrained asymmetry of Italianate villas. The minareted pleasure dome was immediately reproduced on Barnum's stationery and provided him with what he hoped for: a standing testimonial to stylish extravagance, a foretaste of the thrills that awaited paying visitors to his entertainments. The advertising possibilities also justified the great expense—more than one hundred and fifty thousand dollars. . . .

(Neil Harris of *Humbug* can't make up his mind whether to take an uncommitted or a condescending or a holier-than-thou attitude toward Barnum; but any of them is preferable to his pages and pages of lucubrations about the historical significance of the moral fissure in the American character: Poe, Hawthorne, Melville's *Confidence Man,* you name it he's got it.) Barnum had an elephant brought to Iranistan, and instructed his farmhand that whenever a train passed on the rails adjoining the property the elephant was to be in plain sight hitched to a plough and ploughing away at the farmhand's direction; but when he started getting letters from farmers who wanted to buy one he called it off and publicly announced that elephants cost too much to begin with (as much as $10,000 apiece) and ate too much to be economical for such labor. In 1856 he was evicted from Iranistan by his creditors; in 1857, unoccupied, it burned to the ground: it

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was insured for $28,000. In 1865 the American Museum was destroyed by fire: loss, $400,000; insurance, $40,000. In 1868 the New American Museum was destroyed by fire: "Once again Barnum was underinsured, and he took this fire as notice to get out of the museum business." In August 1872 Barnum bought the Hippotheatron buildings in New York to house a "Museum, Menagerie, Hippodrome, and Circus that would furnish employment for two hundred of my people who would otherwise be idle during the winter"; in November the complex opened "before several thousand customers and to enthusiastic newspaper reviews"; in December it burned to the ground. " 'It is somewhat singular that fire is constantly seeking out Mr. Barnum's "great shows," ' the New York *Times* observed [unconvinced that Nemesis was at work], wondering out loud if the fires were the result of carelessness 'or causes still less creditable.' As usual Barnum was underinsured, estimating his loss at more than two hundred thousand dollars." In 1887 a fire "struck Barnum's Bridgeport winter quarters. Most of the elephants and one lion escaped the flames, but the rest of the menagerie was consumed. Barnum estimated his loss at a quarter of a million dollars." His total losses from fires, in property alone, amounted to well over a million dollars, and much of the property was irreplaceable: each time he would set out at once to scour the United States and Europe, personally and through agents, for a new inventory of curiosities, because you don't pick up a Fejee Mermaid at the local thrift store, or for that matter a pair of Labrador whales. Barnum was on the floor of the Connecticut Legislature (of which he was a member at the time), arguing in behalf of his very ingeniously formulated bill to foil a plan by the railroads to gouge commuters, when he was handed a note about the destruction of the first Museum; he read it, laid it down and continued the speech as if nothing had happened, and afterward, saying nothing about it, joked with other members about the upcoming vote (for which his speech turned the tide; he was a conscientious and effective legislator, particularly on the railroads and on attempts at modifying state laws to make them facilitate the full enfranchisement of blacks just after the Civil War when opposition was still stubborn even in the North). He found out

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about another of the fires reading the morning paper while at breakfast with his family: "Oh, look here," he said, "the Museum has burned down"; the others assumed he was joking, but "No, no, it really has." Nemesis had no choice but to give up on Barnum and have a go at Job and Lucifer.

He never allowed any of his private life to become public. He was married forty-four years to his first wife, about whom we have nothing except the fact that she was an invalid during her later years and the photograph in late middle age of a plain, rather sickly-looking face; ten months after her death he married the daughter of an English merchant who had long admired Barnum, was a close friend (Barnum allots a full chapter to him in *Struggles and Triumphs*), and ascribed his prosperity to the principles he had derived from reading *The Life of P. T. Barnum, Written by Himself.* Barnum's second wife was forty years younger than he and everyone remarked on her beauty: Barnum spent more time at home during these years, partly because of his age, partly perhaps because he was fond and proud of her; visitors had the impression that she was as devoted to him as he was to her, and by all outward evidence they lived happily together for seventeen years, till his death; the last increment of *Struggles and Triumphs,* summarizing Barnum's activities during his last two years, was written by her. No private scandal was ever attached to his name, and in all his writings he never mentioned any member of his family except to express platitudes of affection or register the date of a birth or a death. Despite a general notion still associated with his name he was anything but a purveyor of rough and rowdy entertainment: he had the explicit intention of presenting entertainment suitable for whole families to attend, or for women and children to attend safely without escort. In his thirties he gave up alcohol and tobacco, and was a busy, humorous, and passionate temperance lecturer for the rest of his life: one of the conditions an applicant had to meet if Barnum were to accept him for a loan in East Bridgeport was that unless he were an abstainer already he must swear off drinking and smoking.

He had countless friends everywhere, among them Mark Twain, who in a piece he wrote for a San Francisco newspaper in 1867 described the New American Museum (which

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had succeeded the one burned down in 1865) as a "vast peanut stand . . . with a few cases of dried frogs and other wonders scattered here and there, to give variety to the things" and appealed for "some philanthropist" to burn it down like its predecessor (the next year somebody or something obliged); but little by little they warmed to each other. They both lived in Connecticut and exchanged visits; Twain was amused by "the requests for aid and money Barnum received, his 'queer letters,' as the two called them, and toyed with the idea of publishing the most interesting. . . . Barnum eagerly saved the letters for Twain to see," but nothing came of the idea. Another friend was Thackeray, who when he arrived in America in 1853 for a lecture tour called on Barnum for practical advice; they saw each other often when Thackeray was in New York or Barnum in London. Once in London they were in a cabaret where a performer divided laterally as half-woman half-man, long skirt on one side, side-whiskers and trouser-leg on the other, sang both halves (alternately, one guesses) of a male-female duet: Thackeray was revolted; Barnum was so delighted that when he got back to New York he searched for and turned up a woman who could sing in a male as well as a female range and featured her at the Museum.

There are few personal accounts of Barnum by people who knew him well. One who did was Charles Godfrey Leland, educated as a lawyer at Princeton, Heidelberg, Munich, and the Sorbonne, who became a journalist and worked as an editor for Barnum's short-lived weekly paper, *Illustrated News*. The two of them ran a humor column in the paper; and Leland wrote in a memorial piece that Barnum

> would come smiling in with some curiosity of literature such as "the reverse" [the palindrome]—"Lewd did I live & evil I did dwel"—or a fresh conundrum or joke, with all his heart and soul full of it, and he would be as delighted over the proof as if to see himself in print was a startling novelty. We two had "beautiful times" over that column, for there was a great deal of "boy" still left in Barnum. . . . On that humorous column Barnum always deferred to me, even as a small schoolboy defers to an elder on the question of a game of marbles or hop-scotch. There was no affectation or play in it; we were both quite in earnest. I think I

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> see him now, coming smiling in like a harvest-moon, big with some new joke, and then we sat down at the desk and "edited."

(Chapter XLV, omitted in Bode's edition, of *Struggles and Triumphs* is titled "A Story-Chapter" and consists of one joke or pun or comic anecdote after another: the funniest story, the closest to a racy story that he tells, and I'm sorry to say too extended and circumstantial to retell here, is a true one about a clergyman-friend up on a charge of heresy: Barnum was a Universalist, and didn't care for Puritan punctilio.) "Of all the men whom I met in those days in the way of business," wrote Leland,

> Mr. Barnum, the great American humbug, was by far the honestest and freest from guile or deceit or "ways that were dark, or tricks that were vain." He was very kind-hearted and benevolent and gifted with a sense of fun which was even stronger than his desire for dollars. . . . He was a genius like Rabelais, but one who employed business and humanity for material instead of literature, just as Abraham Lincoln, who was a brother of the same band, employed patriotism and politics. All three of them expressed vast problems, financial, intellectual or natural by the brief arithmetic of a joke.

On his deathbed he said he would like to know what the newspapers would say about him when he died. The editors of *The Evening Sun*, having learned of his wish, asked and received his permission to publish his obituary in advance, so two weeks before he died he read the headline and all that followed: "GREAT AND ONLY BARNUM. He Wanted To Read His Obituary; Here It Is. . . ." The on the other hand posthumous obituary in the London *Times* recalled Barnum's last visit to London with The Greatest Show on Earth:

> When, in 1889, the veteran brought over his shipload of giants and dwarfs, chariots and waxworks, spangles and circus-riders, to entertain the people of London, one wanted a Carlyle to come forward with a discourse upon "the Hero as Showman." . . . There was a three-fold show—the things in the stalls and cages, the showman, and the world itself. And of the three perhaps Barnum himself was the most interesting. The chariot races and the monstrosities we can get elsewhere, but the octogenarian show-

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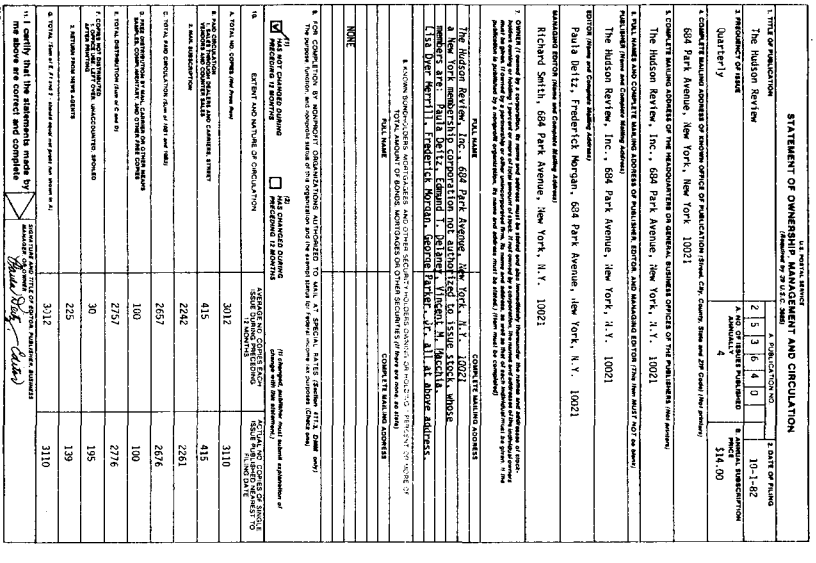
man was unique. His name is a proverb already, and a proverb it will continue.

On such an occasion it isn't decorous for so majestic an organ as the London *Times* to point out that once, over the protests of half the population of Great Britain including John Ruskin, the Prince of Wales, and Queen Victoria herself, Barnum bought from the London Zoo "the largest elephant ever exhibited," Jumbo, and brought it to New York; that once he arranged with Madame Tussaud's sons to buy and transfer to New York her waxworks museum on Baker Street but at the last minute they lost their nerve and refused to sign the agreed-to contract; and that once he was negotiating for the Stratford cottage where Shakespeare had been born (it was in terrible shape; and the main room was now serving as a butcher-shop), which he intended to ship in sections to New York and reassemble inside the American Museum—but he was forestalled by several wealthy Englishmen who, having heard about the imminent blasphemy, bought it themselves and deeded it to the Trustees of Shakespeare's Birthplace. Commented Barnum: "Had they slept a few days longer, I should have made a rare speculation, for I was subsequently assured that the British people, rather than suffer that house to be removed to America would have bought me off with twenty thousand pounds."



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ANNE S. PERLMAN

Practical Gardener

March nearly gone,
the garden with a weedy look,
camellias curled in disarray
on the unturned ground.
And no petunias planted!
I count on them:
Purple-white and downy,
never mind how sticky
to the hand when
I strip their lower leaves.
In the house every vase is empty.
No sweet pungency fills the rooms.
No enchantment of a spectrum
where even sun motes
through a beveled bowl
can catch the brilliant tumble.

Then the mail:
This looks to be his monthly bill.
Hardly glancing,
I know the proud letterhead:
"Philippe Etchenou, Practical Gardener."
It should add, "Young and Sturdy Basque."
I start to drop his bill on the desk,
like a wave to Monsieur Etchenou.
My hand stops.
Strange hand-written words on the page
persevere, push into focus.

Matter-of-factly,
jotted on the tidy bill
his wife writes in English:

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"Due to Philippe's death a
cousin will take over his work.
Thank you."
Just that.

Due to his *death* . . .
Not sick, or *en vacances*?
Through our window
I see the flower garden,
broken up and brown,
and it seems to stare at me
with closed and cloddish eyes.

The only contrary to death is breath
and mine is hot and shallow now,
steaming up the cool window pane.

They say he was found in his truck
and "the authorities" are investigating.

Maybe young gardeners
should die in their trucks
surrounded by burlap sacks
of fresh mown grass.
Like generals dying with their boots on.
I do not know.

Maybe they will investigate all spring
while we plant one sturdy bush
to honor a practical gardener.
Or leave a single wild calla lily in bloom.

Monsieur Etchenou never remembered
how much I hate calla lilies.
My horror made him laugh and he
always forgot to uproot them.

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PRESCOTT EVARTS, JR.

Hunting

Mountain air thickens
toward snow and holds.
Hunters pace the road,
their guns hung tensely,
their jackets heavy
with the color of barns.

It is Thanksgiving again,
near Killington:
rock promontories,
pine carapaces,
deciduous lavenders,
but no movement at all.

"We Gather Together"
from the brick church
hovers in the trees
among the first flakes.
Here is Thanksgiving surely,
the remnants of song.

And released from the mountain,
the Ottauquechee
leaps toward Woodstock,
a mineral green,
bright in its turnings
like the running of deer.

We will sit at our table,
and I will watch
my parents carefully,
for another year has passed.
The air will thicken
into a fall of snow.

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A Christian Childhood

My mother made me count
the cars of the freight train
clicking south toward Boston
that last year of the war.

They moved through the elms
with the slowness of newsreels,
in and out of sunlight,
guns and tanks secured,

box cars, flat cars
one hundred and twenty-six
clicking south, the engine
already across the river.

Give, said my mother's voice
with a dusty resonance.
Give, Give, said the easing
of the ties as they rose and fell.

Give your blood and bones
if you have nothing else.
Give what the world is asking;
Give, said my mother's voice.

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JAMES REISS

Schilfgraben

is German for "reedy ditch." I read it yesterday
on a plaque under a painting of marshland.
When I reached the top of the spiral-tiered gallery,
I stared six stories down at a fountain jetting
and thought of particulars, the proper
names for ferns and vine-hungry moths.

I make a wish for Clara whose hair was straw yellow.
In my journal one summer I called her "my willowy reed."
I wrote: "Clara's waist-long hair made me feel
like Rilke beside her today as we hiked down a slope
toward the Danube over swampy areas
locally known as The Sedge."

Not one straw-yellow strand lasts, saved
between the pages of my journal, to tell me
she is more than the hollow stalk of a phrase.
Yet I wrote: "She wore a barrette
and braided the dough she baked
in ovens that made me think of Treblinka."

I think of half-tracks, tanks,
the dominance of one idea
without regard for particulars.
Then I imagine Clara hatless in 1980,
leaning over a rolling pin or pounding
dough with her fists.

Shy as a marsh bird, mired behind a counter,
she bags pumpernickel, rye,
says Auf Wiedersehen to a customer,
and scribbles on a pad: "These tablespoons,
these numbered measuring cups,
dole out the bread of life."

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ARNOLD KLEIN

After Cendrars

When I think of my lover from the pit of my heart
O Love tears overwhelm me
She's but a child and a child I found her
Pale pure untouched in the pit of a brothel

She's but a child blond mocking and sad
Doesn't smile and never cries
At the pit of her eyes when she lets you drink them
Is a sweet silver lily flower of poets

She's sweet and mute and doesn't run
Though she quivers from head to toe when you come
But when I approach her she takes a step
Shuts her eyes takes a step

For she is my lover other women
Are robes of gold flung over great bodies of flame
My poor love is so lonely
She's all naked she has no body—she is too poor

A modest flower and slender
The flower of poets the poor silver lily
Cold lonely already so faded
Tears overwhelm me when I think of her heart

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OLIVIA HOLMES

Helen in Bed

Helen is forever touching herself: sneaking
one hand under her own breast, where the
weight of some great man presses it into her
chest, to feel herself swallowed in flesh.

Secretly she reaches the other hand
under her ample haunches (squeezing them gently
like ripe pears in the market) to make out
why men are always so excited. Paris finds her

strangely passive. His experience has mainly
been with slaves who only aimed at pleasing
him (he did not know this). Helen lies there
with her head flung sideways, fingers hidden.

He thinks she is thinking of her husband.
Sometimes he falls asleep inside her, glutted.
She rolls him off, but doesn't snuff the candle.
One night, she took a paring knife

and cut her lover's nails to prevent
new red stripes on her back and shoulders.
(Helen will not sleep without a light.)
Paris wakes at dawn, when Greeks are thrusting

at the gate. She curls away then, one hair
caught in her mouth, the sheet between her thighs.
He brushes crystals from her eyes which flicker
sightless. It will be hours before she rises.

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ROBERT S. CLARK

Music in Its Time and Place

MUSIC OUTDOORS—or at least heard where the outdoors impinges upon or is apparent during the experience of listening—is a thing quite apart from our accustomed hermetic musical rounds. For those of us whose musical rituals generally confine us to the dim and soulless interiors of modern concert halls and the polyester plush of postwar opera houses, music heard outdoors is music unshielded from its context, music that as a result can neither be abstract science nor narcissistic aesthetic indulgence.

The Boston Symphony's annual Tanglewood outing, a full two months in duration, puts the conundrum of the classics heard outdoors squarely before the musical thinker. Especially in recent years, under Seiji Ozawa, Tanglewood stretches across all of our musical heritage—chamber and vocal recitals, standard symphonic and choral concerts as well as recent novelties, and opera both in concert form and staged. (Tanglewood has also been offering popular artists in concert, but that is another story.) What sets all this apart from our winter concert-going is the season and the locale. This is music, not in its habitual hothouse now so familiar that the hissing of steam heat, the coughing and rustling of the audience and the periodic rumble of the subway or passing traffic can be shut out without effort, but music fully lodged, for better or worse, in its time and place.

The time is summer, and the place is a still—after forty-six seasons of trampling feet and picnic detritus—bucolic Berkshire hillside. There can be few with any knowledge of the American musical scene who do not have some notion of Tanglewood's existence, and it is surely this country's quintessential music festival. Yet it is neither the oldest nor the longest continuously running event of its kind in this country. The first festival to establish any regularity seems to be the Worcester (Massachusetts) Music Festival, a choral gala modeled on the British example (Birmingham, Leeds, Sheffield) that became an annual event as early as 1858. And a history of the genre in this country would have to include the Chautauqua Festival in upstate New York and Ann Arbor's in Michigan, both begun in 1874, and the better known Bethlehem Bach Festival, which was an annual occurrence by 1898. Then there is Chicago's Ravinia Park (1911), the Hollywood Bowl's "Symphonies Under the Stars" (1922), Philadelphia's Robin Hood Dell (1930), and the City College of New York's Lewisohn Stadium concerts (1918), all but the last still the scene of summer music. Yet none of these jostles

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Tanglewood as the reigning symbol of the American music festival *in vivo*.

The reason lies not in quality or ambition, for, although Tanglewood's record over the years is admirable, there have always been important lapses. The reason is probably the institution that makes Tanglewood unique: the Berkshire Music Center. Founded in 1940 at the instigation of Serge Koussevitzky, then conductor of the Boston Symphony, the Center is today the world's foremost summertime locus of training and experience for beginning and advanced instrumentalists, composers, singers and conductors. The Center's program has three aspects. The Fellowship Program provides instruction at the hands of BSO members and visiting musicians for students whose preliminary training is complete; the Boston University School of the Arts' Tanglewood Institute offers younger musicians, many of them of high school age, both individual and ensemble instruction; and the Seminar Program encompasses a special instructional series in the "master class" mold. This means that the twenty-four standard Boston Symphony concerts each year are framed by almost nightly student performances, not in the shed but in the smaller Theatre-Concert Hall and the Chamber Music Hall on Tanglewood's grounds. The Center's contribution to American musical life over the forty-odd years of its existence is immeasurable. But one statistic hints at its influence, especially given the emphasis on ensemble playing: eighteen percent of the members of the country's major orchestras are former Center students.

It is the scope and intensity of Tanglewood's musical life as a whole that make it pre-eminent. The not atypical year just past put the following menu before the music lover, enough to sate the most voracious appetite: orchestral works familiar (the usual large helping of Beethoven, as well as Wagner, Brahms, Tchaikovsky and more) and not so familiar (Irving Fine's *Toccata concertante*, Shostakovich's "Babi Yar" Symphony No. 13, composer-in-residence Luciano Berio's *Sinfonia* and Concerto for Two Pianos); choral works ranging from the inevitable Beethoven Ninth to Stravinsky's *Les Noces*; chamber works of every stripe, from Haydn and Brahms to Milhaud and Hindemith, for most standard and some not-so-standard instrumental combinations; vocal music ranging from lieder and mélodies to the New Swingle Singers; two special orchestral commissions by Sessions and Panufnik for the BSO's centenary year; large assortments of Stravinsky and Haydn for anniversaries of their births; staged performances of Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex* and Beethoven's *Fidelio*; solo music for piano, flute, guitar, violin, and much more, including the exotica of the annual Festival of Contemporary Music—of which more later.

For one observer, as interesting as much of this fare was, it was just as interesting to note the psychological effects of the time and

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place in which it was recreated. Parlor songs by Chausson and Poulenc, delivered estimably if a bit callowly one evening by two of the Fellowship Program's remarkably well-trained students, were fustian in the first instance and sheer vacuity in the second—the rainy, windy night just swallowed them up. One Sunday afternoon's Stravinsky-Haydn pairing presented a telling contrast. After the appetizer—Stravinsky's Choral Variations on Bach's *Vom Himmel hoch*—we heard that composer's Mass and, after intermission, Haydn's *Missa in angustiis*, the "Nelson" Mass, led by Kurt Masur. Stravinsky's Mass, first performed in 1948, uses the standard soloists (two tenors), four-voice choir and a small ensemble of ten wind instruments. The composer's intention seems to have been to create a work for liturgical use in small churches, one in which the music would not compete for attention with the text, which celebrates the central mystery of the Roman Catholic faith. The result is a work resolutely foursquare and free of excess. Haydn's Mass is of a distinctly different kind: in his notes for the performance, Steven Ledbetter calls it a "sacred symphony." Though composed for a small chapel at Esterhaza, the work, with its trumpets, timpani and organ, its choral polyphony and florid solo lines, almost demands a cathedral's dimensions—and especially in the version that has become customary, and that was used by the BSO: prepared by Johann Nepomuk Fuchs, it adds the standard wind instruments to the strings and remaining forces for which the original is scored.

It will come as no surprise which of the two settings better survived the expansive ripeness and richness of a sunny midsummer afternoon. The sinewy, striving Haydn score seemed jubilantly to belong to the surroundings, the Stravinsky to long for a dim sanctuary somewhere. Its modesty of utterance was dwarfed by the afternoon, and could be heard by an imaginative listener as a kind of abject propitiation of the fierce glory of nature. Haydn's extended hymn of praise and affirmation fit right in, almost as if it sprang from the existence of the day itself, a kind of animistic voice speaking through the assembled singers and instrumentalists. Confined to the concert hall, differences of this sort can be rationalized as matters of style, and pigeonholed, and Haydn might stand hardly taller than Stravinsky. Outdoors, such rationalization is almost impossible.

Fortunately, the Mass was not all there was to the Stravinsky homage, and this year's regular attendee could be instructed once more in the startling fecundity of this musical talent. Stravinsky offerings encompassed the *L'Histoire du soldat* suite, *Fireworks*, Requiem Canticles, *The Firebird* ballet complete, *Le Sacre du printemps*, *Scherzo fantastique*, Capriccio for Piano and Orchestra, *Song of the Nightingale*, *Oedipus Rex*, the Symphony of Psalms, Octet, *Petrouchka* and *Les Noces*. The listener could view the accomplishment almost whole, from the three ballets, imaginative and richly scored, com-

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posed in the early years of the century, through the works of the mature years—*L'Histoire, Oedipus*, Symphony of Psalms, the Capriccio, each seeming to assume a new stylistic pose—and up to the very late Requiem Canticles (1966), from what Stravinsky himself dubbed his "last-ditch" period. In renderings of almost uniformly high quality, the music took on the aspect of a tapestry of early and middle twentieth-century style, strong, complex and subtle—and all of it from a single human mind. (True, one important creative period, including the Symphonies in C and in Three Movements and the opera *The Rake's Progress*, was not represented, but to do it all would have required much more than two months.)

And Ozawa set off the Stravinsky with other works of the present century. Two were commissions for the Boston Symphony's centennial season just past. Roger Sessions' Concerto for Orchestra, beautifully played by the virtuoso orchestra, was an exercise in nostalgia for the atonal aesthetic of the twenties and thirties, meticulous and strenuous and unmemorable. Andrzej Panufnik's *Sinfonia Votiva*, a "votive offering to the miraculous ikon of the Black Madonna of Cestochowa" in the composer's native Poland, cloaked an elaborate "geometrical" construction in a rather familiar array of contemporary orchestral sonorities. The principal lines of the first part moved with rather numbing regularity, but the furious energy of the climax of the second part somewhat redeemed the piece. On an altogether different scale, Shostakovich's Symphony No. 13, incorporating passages from Yevtushenko's well-known poem on the massacre of Jews in the Soviet Union, comes from the composer's customary baggage, an assortment of grave and sometimes grand inspiration, predictable routine and signature sonorities and devices. But the vocal and choral passages serve to set this work apart from others in Shostakovich's variable catalog: he is heard here as the heir of Rachmaninoff and Moussorgsky.

Tanglewood's principal forum for the new is the Berkshire Music Center's annual Festival of Contemporary Music, generally a five- or six-evening series of concerts of orchestral and chamber works written since the Second World War, and augmented by a piece or two—this year the works of Fine and Berio alluded to above—on the concurrent Boston Symphony weekend program. The series is colloquially called "Fromm week," after Paul Fromm, the angel and presiding spirit (he is seventy-five, but rarely misses a contemporary concert). A refugee from prewar Germany, where he was first bitten by the contemporary-music bug, Fromm decided in 1952 to devote some of the money he had made as a wine importer to a foundation that would commission works and help get them performed, hoping "to end the alienation between contemporary composers and performers." In 1956 he and Aaron Copland cooperated in the first Tanglewood contemporary concerts, the forerunners of Fromm week, and in 1964, under the aegis of Gunther Schuller,

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the series became a regular part of the Berkshire Music Center's summer activities, with the students providing the bulk of the performing forces.

Schuller, now artistic director of the Center, has generally been responsible for Fromm week programming, but this year was formally on sabbatical (though very much in evidence). Some of the works played were therefore the choices of either Berio, the acting director of the Fellowship Program's contemporary activities, or his nominal assistant, the Greek composer-conductor Theodore Antoniou, who has become a Center fixture.

Throughout my two decades of music-reporting I have consistently been a partisan of contemporary music as a whole, and not just of its unique pleasures (for only a rare and ascetic spirit could find sufficient nourishment in these). For, after all, if we submit to the notion that contemporary music is only the rattling of pebbles on the barren shore as the great wave recedes, then we who draw sustenance from the tradition are doomed to become just another species of antiquarian. So I have stubbornly kept the faith, confessing it has not been easy. Naturally, the Fromm weeks have offered from year to year both vindication and the seeds of apostasy, and this summer on balance provided more of the latter than the former. Three works by Berio demonstrated his vivacity and facility, qualities for which he is famous, though I suspect they might wear thin on repeated hearings. *The Musical Seminar*, an evening-long Berio-derived piece by his former pupil Gheorghe Costinescu, did a lot of what Eric Salzman and others were doing in the sixties, some of it divertingly, too much of it obviously and heavy-handedly. And so much else, all of it written in the seventies and eighties, seemed, however attractive (or aggressively unattractive) in surface sound, to exhibit the same kind of groping for a style, a *modus operandi*, that has blighted contemporary American music since the mid-sixties. Where a secure musical style was apparent, as in works by Vivian Fine and Vincent Persichetti, inspiration seemed in short supply.

But each Festival offers at least one occasion for hope, and this year it was a cycle of four poems by Earl Kim called *Now and Then*. Written for Fromm's seventy-fifth birthday and spurred by a personal memory of Nagasaki after the atomic bombing, the cycle for soprano and three instruments transcended its spare means. It was not the only impressive work to be heard in the Festival's six days, but it was the only one that, for this listener, reached the plane at which its materials were imaginatively transformed into real art.

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MARCIA B. SIEGEL

Tales of Love and Sake

LIKE MOST ASIAN THEATER, the Japanese stage is highly conventionalized. All the elements—libretti, costumes and make-up, even props and action—are set by tradition and carry specific meanings. Japanese theater is more diversified, and therefore even more opaque to a foreigner, than some of the other Asian forms. For instance, all the noble characters in an Indonesian dance-drama may wear virtually the same costumes; anything more individual about them must be discovered through their words and the way they perform certain set actions. A noble character in a Kabuki play not only wears costume, make-up and wig suitable to his station, but can tell the audience, before saying a word, his age, family connections, disposition, and what he's about to do. Everything in a Kabuki play is loaded, and every move or change in the elements affects the things that were there before.

For some reason—perhaps it's the way in which we're introduced to it—Japanese theater often appears static and ritualistic to the American audience. A set of symbols but no more. We're led to think that if we don't understand the language, we won't understand the play. I didn't ask for a headset during the four performances of Grand Kabuki I attended at the Metropolitan Opera House. Somehow, the idea of listening to a translation of a Kabuki play while I'm looking at it is like eating sushi with a fork. English words didn't get in the way at all in Faubion Bowers' CBS Cable show "The Cruelty of Beauty," with large portions of *The Temple School* (*Terakoya*) filmed in a live performance and overdubbed with Bowers' very discreet interpretation. In fact, I learned a lot from the show. But television is a medium of information anyway, and it denatures Kabuki in its own fashion. Understanding Kabuki dialogue on TV reinforces the emblematic potential of the play; it adds one more set of facts to increase our admiration of the actors' skill and our appreciation of the play as a historical document. Meanwhile, the thread of a deeper emotional empathy is unwinding just beyond our grasp.

Terakoya was like one of those long, made-for-TV melodramas where big name actors jet from one photogenic city to another; glide in and out of beds, executive suites, swimming pools; and submit to being threatened, chased, blown up, shot down, and finally rescued, without our knowing what on earth it was all about, or having experienced the slightest personal engagement with their heavings and thrashings. As with televised opera, the sweep and import of the Kabuki tradition seemed squeezed into virtuosic emoting for the close-up cameras. On stage, the proportion of effect to

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affect changes. The force of rich brocade and vocal distortion, of duels and flamboyant lust, becomes diffused just enough to allow another thing to emerge: the sense of wonderfully tangled and layered emotions.

If the Samurai code on which so many of the Kabuki plots are based seems only an alien product of a feudal system that gave people inflexible duties in return for the right to survive, we shouldn't set it aside as an artistic oddity. I don't think I could operate within such a system, nor could anyone in the modern world. But though I can't identify with the social structures and customs—don't even know what many of them are—I can allow myself to suppose that the characters who live them are real. Then the human stuff of Kabuki involves me completely: the awful choices, separations, pretenses that must be carried out, as well as the reversal of bad fortune, the triumph of the underdog, or the appearance of a miracle on the doorstep. The passions are larger than life because the structures that contain them are implacable, but the passions are no more foreign to me than those in Shakespeare.

The Met season gave us the most satisfying glimpse of Kabuki theater ever in New York, with seven plays and a troupe of fine actors headed by Nakamura Utaemon VI and Nakamura Kanzaburo XVII. The repertory included several different genres and the programs were generous. Although the Met has entirely different proportions from a Kabuki theater, with a stage and front-of-house that are deep rather than wide and shallow, the productions looked clear and bold, and often quite beautiful. Kabuki can have a toy-village quality to Western eyes, because it is done in a combination of nonrealistic, flat, painted backgrounds and architectural sets that are working models of the real thing. The two visual modes are completely reconciled, however, even allowing for a third at times: the naturalistic presence in full view of the audience of musicians and stage attendants. This is only one example of an interplay between the real and the fictitious that prods the viewer on with new and mysterious evocations.

Masakado (*The Witch Princess*) contained several examples of the stage effects for which Kabuki is unequalled. The most elaborate one consisted of the collapse of an ancient temple in an earthquake—artfully disguised breakaway scenery makes it happen. But the simplest one was even more amazing. At the beginning of the play we look, for what seems like a long time, at the deserted temple in the forest. By the ingenious device of leaving the house lights on at a very low level, and pitching the stage light even lower, the designers create an effect of terrific gloom and desolation. Mitsukuni (played by the actor Ebizo), a warrior who's hiding out there, comes onto the porch while we're caught in this apprehensive mood. Suddenly there's a great commotion from the hanamichi (the entrance runway that goes through the audience). Out of a trap,

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half-obscured by smoke and the eerie light of two candles held on shovels by attendants, rises a resplendent woman, the evil Princess Takiyasha (Utaemon).

In the play that follows this spectacular beginning, the princess tries to seduce Mitsukuni by magically taking on the form of his mistress. She almost succeeds, but he discovers that she's actually the daughter of an enemy he has killed, and he resists her. She's infuriated by this—not only her plans for revenge but her feminine vanity have been thwarted. She reveals herself as a witch and wards off a whole troop of acrobatic soldiers summoned by Mitsukuni to capture her. She brings about the earthquake, but Mitsukuni manages to survive, and the play ends in a standoff—obviously these characters will meet again.

The seduction scene provides opportunities for both actors to do different types of dances, and to play with conflicting emotions. Takiyasha, against her will, is attracted to the man she's come to betray; Mitsukuni suspects a trick, but if this really is his lover . . . Utaemon's disguise as the mistress isn't a disguise at all but a clever imitation of a young girl's dance. Later, transformed to her witch-persona, Takiyasha actually changes costume, peeling down one layer of kimono to make herself look even more imposing, and doing something negligible to her hair that suddenly makes her seem demonic. Utaemon seems to grow in height and girth as he gives vent to the witch's full fury—but even as he repels the approaching soldiers, there lingers in his movements something of the seductive grace of the courtesan and the proud determination of the princess.

The Japanese get a special pleasure from images that overlap and accumulate in this way. During an evening of Noh theater presented at the Asia Society by the Wenner-Gren Foundation, Izumi Yoshio danced the role of Kakitsubata, the Spirit of the Iris. The actor represents at least three ideas at the same time. In the present, he is a young girl who invites a passing priest to spend the night. The girl tells the priest an old story of the poet who dedicated a poem to his beloved. This poem—and the young girl's dance—contain the tender feelings evoked by the iris flowers growing at that spot, and still growing there centuries later. To me, the dance gave no literal clues to this; good plot summaries, a complete libretto, and a helpful introduction told us where the meaning might be found. But after some time, the grave dancing figure in its heavy folds of purple brocade began to suggest the formal curves of the flower, the agitation of a breeze by the side of a pond.

Western theater is not primarily poetic in this way—we aren't asked to spread our attention over so many layers of time and appearance. In the other Noh play at the Asia Society, *Kiyotsune*, a dead warrior appears in a dream to his wife and relates how he died. Our theater would simply show the battle and the suicide, and maybe later the wife learning of it from some messenger. By seeing the actor returned from the dead to tell the story, we can experi-

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ence not only the heroic and tragic events, but the hero's own reflections on them and his wife's sad reaction—as well, perhaps, as our own. Events, in Noh especially, seem to be only the instrumentation for the release of a poignant feeling, and the narrating of such a story gains its power not only from its having multiple perspectives, but from echoes in other times, other poetic forms.

Noh is one of the sources of Kabuki, and the company at the Met presented the Noh-derived *Sumidagawa*, a long dissertation on a mother's sorrow, first at the disappearance of her son, then at finding he has died in pitiable circumstances. Utaemon, in a totally different type of role, played the woman Hanjo, and Kanzaburo was the peasant ferryman who breaks the news to her. The play is essentially a meditation on an emotional state, with realistic effects like the boat that crosses from one river bank to the other, and mimetic touches in the acting that would not be seen in the more austere Noh version. When the woman first appears we see her as deranged, wandering, her hat trailing from her shoulder as if she were too weak to hold it and too distracted to wear it. She is sorrowful at the outset, half-sensing what she will find out. But each new exchange with the ferryman initiates a fresh flood of grief—the sight of birds, the ferryman's mimed story of the boy's death, his offer to take her across to the grave. At one point she drops her fan, and the ferryman attempts to give it back to her. In her madness she doesn't even know he's there, and his ineffectual gestures are both comic and pathetic indications of his sympathy. In a sense, both characters, though of different social classes, are undone by their situation, and react with atypical behavior.

The question of how to make a contemporary theater when old forms are still valid—Kabuki, after all, was flourishing two centuries ago—is an urgent one in Japan. Instead of discarding traditional devices and techniques, as we tend to do in the West, many modern groups are making use of them. Dairakuda-kan, the most advanced of four companies that played here at several summer festivals, is a fusion of traditional elements with ideas borrowed from such avant-gardist models as the Living Theater and Jerzy Grotowski, all produced with expert pop stylishness. Neither before, during, nor since the performance I saw at SUNY-Purchase was I able to obtain any information as to the content of the two-hour spectacle called *Sea-Dappled Horse*. What I derived from the succession of scenes, then, was a purely intuitive notion about the persistence of roles and role-playing. The piece seemed to be about theatrical and sexual roles overlapping into life, about tradition exerting a magical and possibly disabling authority over the contemporary actor.

The play-pageant opens with a scene of primal unity and isolation. The twenty male and female actors, nearly naked, are pinioned around the edges of the stage, apparently held up and joined together by a single rope. At signals given by off-stage cries, they all

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change from one kind of action to another: slowly stepping from one foot to the other—flopping over—crouching on hands and knees. The activity stays the same until the next cue. This apparently arbitrary structure is maintained throughout the piece. In other scenes, a line of girls dressed as kewpie dolls, all with their mouths open, make crazily seductive motions at the audience. Two marvelous, dervish-like creations careen onto the stage. They batter at the shoji panels that are hung around them like shower curtains, until they each break out. One is costumed a bit like a schoolmaster or a priest in Kabuki, the other resembles an aging noblewoman or a demon. They engage in several kinds of inconclusive combat and leave. Two women dressed as disheveled courtesans writhe and moan in a grotesque parody of sexual come-on. A partly disrobed lord appears, ignores them, makes his way slowly to the front of the stage on enormous high platform sandals while sultry soft-rock music plays. Reaching the edge, he teeters over a giant incense burner or a volcano or an immolation pyre. Accidentally or on purpose, he topples off the getas and falls into the smoke. Not the end.

People who might have helped us sort this out were quoted as saying Dairakuda-kan—all Japanese art—cannot be translated or conveyed to English-speakers. The middle-class audience at Purchase was understandably bored, annoyed, or sarcastic. Even when we can catch the idiom, the lack of a story here, or a perceptible relationship between any of the characters, made the piece seem as alienated and exploitative as rock or modern ballet.

Kei Takei, who came to New York from Tokyo in 1967, has found another solution. Using the underlying themes of the tradition—the high intensity, slowness, and concentration of the acting; the idea of transformation; the close relationship between human life and its animal, plant, geological, and supernatural counterparts; the manipulations of time and symbolic meanings—Takei has developed her own metaphoric system. One of her early pieces, *Talking Desert Blues* (1972), was performed at the Nippon Club by Masako Yokoi, and it was fascinating to be reminded how strange Takei's work appeared to us when we didn't know her language. Strange but not unintelligible.

For most of the dance a woman sits uncomfortably upright on a large box, one leg bent, the other stretched out straight in front of her. A small window is cut in one side of the box, and inside the window is an unsmiling face. The face never moves through the whole dance. From time to time the woman seems to crumple, as if to relieve the effort of the pose she's holding, or as if she's in danger of falling asleep. She rouses herself to leave the box and do snatches of oddly dissociated, often wild, but ordinary-looking movement: she might be bouncing an imaginary ball, she breathes with exaggerated effort, slides around on her back. Perhaps these interludes are the woman's memories or fantasies. Even in this short piece, Takei was able to establish both a ritualistic pattern and

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a strong contrast between two physical, and probably psychological, states.

Her epic work *Light*, begun in 1969, acquired its sixteenth and seventeenth parts this year. (Both had their New York premieres in August at the Performing Garage.) Over the years, each recurring activity, costume, object has grown in significance even though none of these elements had any special meaning when *Light* began. For instance, when we see Takei alone squatting in front of a bullet-shaped wooden object in Part 16 (*The Daikon Field*), the image is an echo of Part 3 (*Rainpuddle Reflections*), where she stared fixedly into a pool of light while other dancers performed a set of dangerous tasks with blindfolds on. It also recalls Part 8, where she did a fetish dance around a pile of clothes, and Part 10, where, with an X painted clear across her face, she danced and clapped two rocks together while unseen assailants threw stones at her. It seems an obvious idea, but few theater artists have built their own vocabulary of leitmotifs from such simple yet mutable materials.

The world of *Light* up to now has been quite primitive. People have fought with rocks, planted and harvested and built with their hands and a few crude tools, worn clothes that were little more than tubes of fabric. In Part 16 and 17 I thought Takei was suggesting an intrusive force, that of technology—or culture. Cruel as the natural order can be, in *Light* the humans have always survived. Now it's not so certain that they'll be able to control the products they've made. In *Daikon Field*, the wooden object Takei alternately desires, worships, plays with, and fears is the same shape as some oversized white radishes that are hurled at her from the wings. But it's intricate, angular, fits together like a jigsaw puzzle—and it could be a rocket, a bomb. The more she vacillates between adoring it and wanting to destroy it, the more white radishes rain down on her, until she's knocked flat and the lights go out.

In Part 17 (*Dreamcatcher's Diary*), clothes are once again the issue. Five men and five women engage in a series of highly competitive games that involve grabbing items of clothing and putting them on. Sometimes they work in teams—men against women or male-female couples. The struggles are intense and often violent, or horridly funny as the performers become unrecognizable under layers of shapeless T-shirts, pajama bottoms, sweaters, bikinis, feather boas, ski masks. Most of the piece is accompanied by an elaborate post-expressionist score by Norma Dalby for percussion and John Wilson's operatic baritone. The only time all the performers become a working community is when they sit in a circle and create a sort of gamelan, playing contrapuntal rhythms on an assortment of bowls, small drums and pieces of wood. However, the more exciting their orchestral playing gets, the more they're impelled to get up and dance. It's easy to see that the better they get at producing loud, complex cross-rhythms, the further they'll get from harmony and the closer to all-out war.

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CHARLES W. MILLARD

Adolph Gottlieb[1]

ADOLPH GOTTLIEB WAS A NEW YORKER born and bred. He was raised in Manhattan, where he had been born in 1903, in the expectation that he would enter the family stationery business, but by 1920 he had enrolled at the Parsons School of Design, having already attended weekly classes at the Art Students' League. He also enrolled in a design course at Cooper Union and followed Robert Henri's lectures at the League, as well as John Sloan's course in illustration. An eager museum-goer, Gottlieb travelled in 1921–2 to Paris, where he was able to see not only the old masters in the Louvre, but also a good deal of modern painting. While there, he drew from the model at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière. On his return, he resumed his classes at Parsons and with Sloan, graduating from the latter's course in 1924 but continuing to study and attend sketch classes until 1929. The work of these apprentice years, as one would expect, shows Gottlieb experimenting with a variety of effects and consolidating his means in a search for a manner of his own. *Portrait,* of about 1923, for example, clearly evokes northern Expressionism in its rough, bony outlines and the intensity of the figure's sidelong glance, but its almost monochrome palette—blacks and dark reddish browns—suggests American painting of a decade or two earlier. Situated in an indeterminate but shallow space, its bust-length figure is large in scale, and the careful layering of tones, in a paint application that threatens to become muddy because of its deep monochrome, is no doubt an attempt to imitate the subtleties of old master facture.

By 1925, Gottlieb's compositions had become more complex, as in *Still Life—Gate Leg Table.* The linear complexity of the table legs in this canvas weaves an elaborate pattern across the bottom half of the picture, while the few still life objects above are carefully placed and rendered in relatively large scale. The picture is worked out in a lighter tonality than *Portrait,* largely embodied in the whitish wall and tablecloth, although that lightness is mostly confined to the upper half of the composition. Greater coloristic richness and subtlety is apparent in *Grand Concourse* of about 1927, a city scene in which a foreground tree impedes the diagonal recession suggested by the street and contrasting tonal areas are scattered throughout the picture. The sky is rendered in a purplish-blue, a color that is played off against some deep reds in rooftops and buildings, and a loosen-

[1] These reflections were provoked by the exhibition "Adolph Gottlieb: A Retrospective," which originated at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., where it was held 24 April–6 June 1981.

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ing of the brushwork emphasizes the painting's relative freedom. Both this more obvious brushwork and the tendency toward brighter and lighter color are also apparent in *South Ferry Waiting Room* of about 1929. The center of this composition is occupied by a newsstand covered with magazines, each rendered by a stroke of paint in a clear, high-valued hue, a coincidence of brushstroke and represented object typical of Gottlieb at this time. Although the strokes themselves are relatively thin, they are emphasized by a texture that results from a kind of dry-brushing. A multi-figure composition set in a complex interior, *South Ferry Waiting Room* is perhaps Gottlieb's most ambitious work of the 1920s.

The effects of Gottlieb's knowledge of French painting became briefly apparent around 1930. *The Wasteland* of that year is carried out in a Derain-like dark brown and green palette, its Cézanne-derived brushwork softening the overall linear pattern (generally composed of outline) that had heretofore characterized the artist's work. *Esther*, of 1931, evokes Degas, with the relatively finished face played off against a loosely brushed torso and a background that seems unfinished and is structured by a few broad outlines. Like Degas, Gottlieb seems to have been interested at the time in painting that was spacious but not atmospheric. These French reminiscences were succeeded in Gottlieb's work by a much more important influence, that of Milton Avery, whom he had met in 1929. *Man with Pigeons* of 1932 is characterized by Averyesque simplifications and patternizations, and *Seated Nude* of 1934, one of Gottlieb's finest pictures of the early thirties, is entirely in Avery's manner. This shows not only in the formal simplifications, the stylization of the facial features, the abrupt tonal changes that characterize the shading of the face and breasts, the distortions of the chair in which the nude sits, and such idiosyncracies as the thin linear pattern scratched into the floor with the butt end of the brush, but, above all, in the coloristic simplicity—mixed blues against reddish browns—and breadth of facture. Discrete strokes are suppressed in favor of broad areas thinly and evenly applied, and the coloristic richness toward which Gottlieb had been working here reaches a peak in grayed and softened hues that are enlivened by being thinly washed over one another and imperceptibly blended.

The later 1930s, particularly 1938, were years of experimentation for Gottlieb. His interest in Avery's broad color effects continued, reaching a peak in *Untitled (Self-Portrait in Mirror)* of about 1938, in which they are combined with a return to harsher linear patterns. In this picture, the parallel stripes of the wallpaper are overridden by the sweeping curve of the mirror frame, and the few objects on the foreground bureau top are carried out in broad, uninflected black or white line. Pictorial space is made at once deeper and shallower by the mirror that occupies about two-thirds of the composition, and the painting is, in every way, a bold, abstracting statement suggesting how hard Gottlieb was trying to pull together the various

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strands in his art. Certain pictures—*Untitled (Portrait—Blue Bandana)* of about 1937 and *Circus Performers* of 1938, for instance—show a clear awareness of Picasso's painting, the latter suggesting Blue and Rose period work, the former the Picasso of the 1930s. For all its formal reminiscences of the Spaniard, however, *Blue Bandana* is worked out in quite un-Picassoid grayed and smoothed colors. Other compositions are constructed using a fairly rigorous synthetic Cubist space without directly evoking Picasso, their elements broken up into broad planes and flattened against the picture plane (*Still Life—Alarm Clock,* 1938, and *Untitled, Cactus Still Life, New York,* 1939). But the most prophetic pictures are those indebted to Surrealism or, more frequently, to its native manifestation, Magic Realism. A series of canvases created between 1938 and 1940 are of this type, and generally represent tabletop still lives seen against landscapes. The elements depicted are often bony, rocky, or tree-like, modulating between the still lives and the landscapes and making the precise nature of the compositions ambiguous. Some of these pictures are highly stylized and abstracted, their elements reduced to biomorphic or geometricized shapes. In these, objects tend to be few and to be seen against broad color planes, and entire compositions are worked out in subtle monochrome, evidencing Gottlieb's color mastery, as in the softened and carefully modulated tones of pink, beige, and brown in *Untitled (Pink Still Life—Curtain and Gourds)* of 1938. Some are almost Dali-esque in their clarity, a manner that culminates around 1940 in compositions of real or imagined objects set into boxes set, in turn, into landscapes. One of the finest of these "metaphysical" pictures is *Untitled (Box and Sea Objects)* of 1940, in which the generally narrow value range is forcefully accented by a white shell seen against the black interior of a box that runs out of the composition at its left edge, enlarging the picture's overall scale and binding its elements to the surface of the canvas.

After a brief flirtation with geometricized biomorphic abstraction in 1941, Gottlieb arrived at the first of the manners for which he is now widely known—his pictographs. These are clearly derived from such canvases as *Box and Sea Objects,* and their surfaces are subdivided by irregular linear grids, the resulting subordinate rectangles being filled with geometrical or anatomical elements, notably eyes. The overall effect is one of patterning varied by formal differentiation, unified by coloristic coherence, and modulated by gentle tonal contrast. Pictorial space disappears almost entirely, partly because of the governing grid that seems strapped to the surface of the canvas, and partly by the elimination of shading, but Mondrian-like tautness is avoided through the use of mixed and grayed ground colors. Although in 1943 there was a tendency for Picassoid and/or Surreal forms to reappear in dense juxtaposition within Gottlieb's grids, he had taken definite steps toward suppressing those grids by 1942. This is apparent in *Pictograph—Symbol,* of that year, in which com-

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partmentalization is effected not by a drawn grid but by tonally and coloristically differentiated planes that butt up against one another, a few of which have pictographic elements drawn on top of them. *Pictograph,* also of 1942, evidences Gottlieb's continuing interest in rich color, and is built up of pinks and soft grays underlain with blue, the lines defining its grid also being carried out in blue. By 1944–5, the grids' tendency to break down is clearly apparent both in a general unification of the ground colors and a blurring of the forms on top of them (*Water, Air, Fire,* 1947), as well as in the continuation of forms or linear patterns from one compartment to another (*Nostalgia for Atlantis,* 1944). Gottlieb's palette darkened considerably during the later forties, and many canvases were worked out in smoldering combinations such as browns and blacks, or dark blues and greens, sparked with red. The result of this trend was a Matta-like crudeness in such pictures as *Green and Blue* (1945), a crudeness that brings to mind some of Baziotes' earlier compositions. An opposing tendency for light, clearly-defined calligraphic forms to float freely across dark grounds (*Sounds at Night,* 1948), on the other hand, recalls the late work of Bradley Walker Tomlin. Between these two extremes stand a few Miró-like canvases in which heavy, dark shapes or linear patterns are seen against lighter grounds (*Figuration of Clangor,* 1951).

Generally speaking, the late forties and early fifties were a period during which the two poles of Gottlieb's art—a subtle and tender colorism and a coarser, more "expressionist" calligraphic coruscation—seem set against each other. The expressionist trend is to be seen in heavy, roughened paint surfaces occupying the interstices of broad black patterns reminiscent of Kline (*Unstill Life,* 1952; *The Couple,* 1955), or in overlaid webs that seem indebted to Pollock, culminating in the all-over patterning of the mural-sized *Labyrinth no. 3* of 1954. Colorism found its outlet in a series of Tomlinesque pictures, such as the lovely *Composition* of 1955 in which thickened linear shapes in black, white, blue, and burnt orange dance over a brown and brick-red ground. Out of this crucible of cross-currents there began to emerge pictures of much larger scale than the easel paintings Gottlieb had heretofore preferred. One such is *Night Flight* of 1951, in which open linear shapes seen against a broadly brushed and highly inflected brownish ground run off the edges of the canvas. In another, *Sentinel* (1951), these linear shapes are joined by a long black silhouette running the length of the right side of the picture and cut off by it on three sides. The clear juxtaposition of this shape, with its crisp outline, against the softened and atmospheric pink-orange ground suggests a new openness that was to have important consequences for Gottlieb's art, as does the large irregular oval at the top center of the picture, encircled by a clearly defined white halo.

The first of the "bursts" that were to constitute Gottlieb's mature imagery appeared in 1952, and were initially characterized by the

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dichotomy between subtle and crude effect that governs the work of the early fifties. *The Frozen Sounds no. 2* (1952), for instance, is worked out in harsh red-black-white color harmonies, its trowelled-on paint roughening the surface of the canvas and its blurred calligraphy writhing across the bottom of the composition. By contrast, *Eclipse* of the same year juxtaposes black and white circles against a pinkish ground, which softens their intensity and enriches their color. Its paint is somewhat less obviously applied than that of *Frozen Sounds,* and its network of white and gray calligraphy helps unify the composition. In both works, a straight horizon divides the picture at slightly below mid-point and four circular or elliptical shapes (one partial in *Frozen Sounds*) are placed against the "sky" like suns. In *Frozen Sounds,* these shapes are sharply scribed, standing out clearly against the white. In *Eclipse* they are surrounded by haloes of less intense areas of the ground color that mitigate their otherwise intense presence. The bottom portions of both compositions are taken up with a continuous web of calligraphic brushwork through which a modulated and more intense (and, in the case of *Eclipse,* darker) version of the ground color is seen. By 1956 this format had resolved itself into the one that was to characterize all of Gottlieb's later painting. In *Black, Blue, Red* of that year, there is only a single inflected ground color—blue. One ellipse is placed against it at the top of the pronouncedly vertical canvas, and a large irregular area of black calligraphy occupies the bottom. The black of this area reappears in small bits throughout the canvas, as if the bottom area were whirling and throwing them off, or as if the black were a ground color that Gottlieb had permitted to show through everywhere. The paint is knifed on, and the slashing evidence of its application as well as the unrelieved heaviness of the color give the picture an aggressive and not entirely pleasant character of considerable strength. This character is mitigated in *Blast I* (1957) by a softening of the edges of both the upper circle and the lower calligraphy, by restriction of the colors to those two areas (the color of neither is allowed to invade the ground in other parts of the painting), and by broader, less obvious facture. In general, one is here aware of the healing of whatever wounds had caused the opposition of elements in the pictures of the preceding decade, the "expressionist" Gottlieb finding an outlet in free calligraphy, the more refined Gottlieb in large and carefully softened color areas. The simplicity and large scale of his art at this time evidences the relaxed mastery that was to inform his painting until his death in 1974.

Although many of the early bursts are worked out in black, white, and red—the masterful *Dialogue no. 1* (1960), for example, floats a red and a black disk over black calligraphy, all of which is seen against a grayed ground—bright and varied color began to reappear about 1959, witness *Spray,* with its intense yellow calligraphy against a rich brown ground. In both cases, one is conscious of Gottlieb's effort to make tauter, more subtly integrated composi-

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tions, balancing circles against calligraphy as carefully as possible and calculating the interstices according to the strength of the ground color. In pictures such as *Una* (1959), calligraphy is abandoned altogether. Here, a small gray circle floats about two-thirds of the way up a modulated blue ground, the simplicity of the design serving to accentuate Gottlieb's mastery as a large-scale colorist. As color came back into both his circles and his grounds during the sixties, Gottlieb's balancing act became more complex. He solved potential scale problems by manipulating his calligraphy, and made brightly colored disks smaller than reticently colored ones to hold against the ground. Increasingly, he found that value contrast could be used to hold pictures together, another element in his balancing act of hue, shape, and size.

Gottlieb's burst format reached an extreme of subtlety and delicacy in *Two Disks* of 1963, in which the eponymous disks—one mustard-colored and one a darker variation of the ground color—are seen unusually low against a rich pink ground. The black calligraphy at the bottom is largely suppressed by being overpainted with a wash of the ground color, and the ghostly presences thus created (and also present in the haloes around the circles) help activate, modulate, and unify the painting's surface. As the sixties progressed and Gottlieb's large scale (and increasingly large size) color abstractions developed, they tended to dispense with calligraphy altogether in favor of contrasting ground colors in the lower half of the painting (*Primaries and Gray,* 1967). Gottlieb also presented his ellipses against monochrome grounds, as in *Equinox* of 1963 in which three sharply but irregularly defined ovals at the bottom seem to lie on top of the single ground color, while the larger, soft-edged circle at the top, closer in value to the ground, melts into it and pulls it up to itself. Conversely, calligraphy could take over, its antic shapes spreading across a canvas in all directions (*Azimuth,* 1965). During its last fifteen or so years, Gottlieb's painting was characterized by a masterful freedom that makes generalization difficult and shows Gottlieb to have been one of the finest painters of his generation. If he was typical of that generation in starting from unremarkable, although entirely accomplished, beginnings, he was no less typical of it in arriving at open, relaxed, and large-scale mastery only after having passed through a period of frenetic exploration. Generally speaking, American abstract painting was brought to full flower by those who lived long enough and had sufficient artistic wit to push their art beyond the nervous figuration of the forties and early fifties toward the broad colorism of the sixties. Although he has not always been perceived as outstanding in that group, a retrospective look at his painting from the standpoint of the eighties demonstrates that Adolph Gottlieb deserves a place among the finest of those artists.

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Reviews

WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD

Sage Lives

EMERSON AS EVERYBODY AGREES is a representative man, but most of the time an impossible writer. He may be the precursor of Stevens, Ashbery, and Harold Bloom (or so Bloom would see it) but that doesn't make him any more likely to be read. Students, who are supposed to confront the classic texts, take him like a dose of medicine, while colleagues (even in "English") have been known to opine that they "can't read him." His lack of appearance in conversation and debate bears out this disinclination. An interesting, argumentative book of some years back by Jonathan Bishop tried to distinguish between Emerson when he was a good writer and a not-so-good one, and its approach had the merit of behaving as if there were real listeners with mixed responses at the end of Emerson's sentences.[1] More recently, Bloom has appropriated him to the group of "strong" poets or misreaders: "Emerson never believes or acknowledges that he has failed his language; what he insists upon knowing is that his language, language itself, always fails his soul—or rather the Oversoul, which indeed transcends the dance or interplay of tropes." It is nice for Emerson's reputation to be in that strong club, but hardly conducive to further debate, considering the terms used. Now we have Gay Wilson Allen's large biography,[2] which not everyone who begins will finish, and which—whatever its merits as an orderly narrative—will bring about no changes in our ways of thinking about or reading him.[3]

Anyone who has looked at Professor Allen's previous books on

[1] *Emerson on the Soul* (1964). One of the best pieces of contemporary criticism of Emerson, and an excellent introduction to his work, is Warner Berthoff's essay on *Nature* (in *Fictions and Events*, 1971).

[2] WALDO EMERSON, by *Gay Wilson Allen*. Viking. $25.00.

[3] Since the appearance of Mr. Allen's biography, there have been two important additions to Emerson literature. In *Emerson's Fall* (Continuum, $14.95), B. L. Packer has written what seems to me the best single book on Emerson as a writer: learned, highly intelligent, lucidly argued throughout. And Joel Porte (in *Emerson in His Journals*, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, $25.00) has made a one-volume selection from the journals to replace the old one by Bliss Perry. Handsomely illustrated, and with occasional linking commentary by Porte, the journals show Emerson at his most rewarding and most various, and have good claim to be—as Larzer Ziff recently called them—"the single greatest document of nineteenth-century American culture in existence."

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Whitman and William James will know what to expect from the Emerson: a thorough review of major events and human relationships, a charting of intellectual growth and social backgrounds, an inquiry into the sources of thought—all of it written in a brisk, no-nonsense style into which the biographer is careful not to intrude his prejudices or compete with his subject by any up-front theatrics. No nonsense in his style, but also no color; in fact colorless would not be too demeaning an adjective for the directness of Allen's prose, untouched by annoyance or humor or passionate sympathy, always ready to get on to the next phase, the next chapter. This style has its virtues, mainly for what it avoids: on one hand, the overly sympathetic, sometimes gushing, you-are-there manner of biographies which purport to take you inside their subject's head and pronounce on what Emerson "really" felt at this or that time; on the other hand, the detached, lordly, Lytton Strachey-like dissection of your subject as, most of the time, either a fool or a monster. There is admirable self-restraint in Allen's presentation of Emerson.

As long as he is dealing with "facts"—events in the life like the influence on him of his aunt, Mary Moody Emerson, or his attending Harvard College, his joining his father's church in Boston, his term at the Divinity School and his early preaching, his blissful marriage to Ellen Tucker and her premature death from consumption (she died in the winter of 1831, two years after their marriage and after acting on doctor's advice to exercise her bleeding lungs with daily ventures out in the winter cold), or Emerson's own bad health and his miraculous restoration by the extended trip through Europe in 1832—Allen does a very good job. In fact by far the most interesting part of his biography is the first third of it, taking us up through Emerson's decision that "to be a good minister it is necessary to leave the ministry," and his launching out into new human latitudes, the discovery of his vocation as a writer. On the matter of Emerson's benefiting financially from Ellen's death, Allen has failed to satisfy one reviewer, Kenneth Lynn (*Commentary*, April 1982), who suggests that there was something fraudulent in the contrast between the idealistic insistences of "The American Scholar," and the solid material security his wife's legacy had allowed him to settle on. Lynn tendentiously takes on Emerson scholars and critics who he says have averted their eyes from this unpleasant spectacle, and he goes so far as to impugn both Emerson's motives in marrying Ellen and the sincerity or fullness of his grief after her death. There is no doubt that Emerson was very interested in his wife's financial situation, and Lynn quotes some damaging material in which his eagerness that she make out a will takes on embarrassing prominence (Allen wishes Emerson had been less "prudent," even though he says it was good advice). But in the urge to unmask Emerson, show that his resignation from the church was a matter of financial convenience and that his noble spiritual exhortations were

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too easily won, even hypocritical, Lynn has perhaps seen through too much. It may be preferable to behave as Allen does, feel uneasy about Emerson's conduct in the whole matter but refuse to see it as therefore undercutting or exposing as false the declarations of spiritual independence he began to address himself to upon leaving the Unitarian Church.

As the biographer puts it, speaking of Emerson's condition just before the death of Ellen his wife, "Increasingly, to [him], life was consciousness, and he sought constantly to deepen and enrich it. This made him at times seem strongly 'otherworldly,' as when he declared, 'How ridiculous that the follies of the world should vex you!' " Here Allen, with his "at times" and "seem," tries to domesticate Emerson's wildness. "No man has ever stated his griefs as lightly as he might," runs a sentence in "Spiritual Laws" written in 1837; but six years before, and two hours after Ellen's last breath, he wrote to his aunt Mary Moody in what Allen describes as "a state of euphoria": "My angel is gone to heaven this morning & I am alone in the world & strangely happy." Emerson goes on to suggest that this is because his beloved will be tortured no more, and Kenneth Lynn might read the utterance as a covert allusion to the bequest he would receive. My own feeling is that the utterance is a very strange one, some ways beyond the reach of our sympathetic identification. Emerson was not "one of us," and it may be that to "understand" him, attempt to feel our way into the "euphoria" (Allen's word) he supposedly was experiencing, is as impossible as it is cruel to reduce his state to a purely materialistic and calculating one.

Another way of saying that increasingly for Emerson life was consciousness is to say that he was a poet, and that in his aspiring mind the poet was the complete man who "apprises us not of his wealth, but of the common wealth." The poet (in his essay of that title) is isolated among his contemporaries by his truth and his art, but he will eventually draw all men toward him: "For all men live by truth and stand in need of expression. In love, in art, in avarice, in politics, in labor, in games, we study to utter our painful secret. The man is only half himself, the other half is his expression." The unfortunate thing about *Waldo Emerson* is that Mr. Allen is pretty much helpless before Emerson's expression. He can (and he does) talk about Neo-Platonic sources for this or that essay, but when he comes to deal with the thing itself he is not markedly resourceful. The great injunction at the end of *Nature* elicits this from him: "Emerson may seem to desert rationality when he says 'Build therefore your own world,' but he is speaking metaphorically and not literally." Any serious reader of Emerson would be justified in putting down at this point (p. 273) a book which talks this way. What on earth does it mean to be "speaking metaphorically" (especially with a "But" before it, as if that explained anything)? And when is Emerson *not* speaking metaphorically? Questions like these seem

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never to have occurred to Allen. Dealing with stirring sentences from "The American Scholar" he unwittingly takes the blood out of them: "The right use of books is to 'inspire'—that is, stimulate." No, *inspire*: "They are for nothing but to inspire," said Emerson. But he also said that books were "for the scholar's idle times." Allen quotes that little bombshell (what is a scholar up to during his non-idle times?) and hurries past it without comment. To Emerson's "Uriel," which Robert Frost called "the best Western poem yet," Allen gives a bald paraphrase, translating the metaphors into real-life equivalents: "The 'sad self-knowledge' that fell on Uriel was Emerson's realization that Harvard and leaders in the Unitarian Church had abandoned him." Oh. "One must be an inventor to read well," Emerson wrote. Allen lacks inventiveness, is about as unpoetic a reader of this poet as could be found.

Emerson's best, most inventive readers, were the three great ones who summed him up at the close of the last century: Santayana, William James, and John Jay Chapman. Santayana, whose estimate of Emerson's worth is full of reservations and ironies, put his finger (in the opening paragraph of his essay in *Poetry and Religion*) on the essential situation of Emerson's readers who felt they were in the presence of a rare sage: "More than the truth his teaching might express, they valued the sense it gave them of a truth that was inexpressible. They became aware . . . of the ultra-violet rays of his spectrum, of the unaudible highest notes of his gamut, too pure and thin for common ears." This sense that we are in the presence of inexpressible truth must still be felt by anyone who reads Emerson with responsive excitement. John Jay Chapman went further, in his brilliant description of how Emerson's rhetoric works on us:

> The imagination of the reader is touched by every device which can awake the admiration for heroism, the consciousness of moral courage. Wit, quotation, anecdote, eloquence, exhortation, rhetoric, sarcasm, and very rarely denunciation, are launched at the reader, till he feels little lambent flames beginning to kindle in him. He is perhaps unable to see the exact logical connection between two paragraphs of an essay, yet he feels they are germane. He takes up Emerson tired and apathetic, but presently he feels himself growing heady and truculent, strengthened in his most inward vitality, surprised to find himself again master in his own house.

The reader can't make the logical connection of one paragraph to the next, "yet he feels they are germane" and grows heady, truculent. As with Santayana's observation, Chapman's is equally relevant to our renewal of vitality when we encounter a moment such as the following from "Literary Ethics," in which Emerson is saying how, for all the praise of nature in Latin and English poetry, "the natu-

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ralist of this hour" finds that those poets scarcely began to know nature:

> . . . that they contented themselves with the passing chirp of a bird, that they saw one or two mornings, and listlessly looked at sunsets, and repeated idly these few glimpses in their song. But go into the forest, you shall find all new and undescribed. The honking of the wild geese flying by night; the thin note of the companionable titmouse in the winter day; the fall of swarms of flies, in autumn, from combats high in the air, pattering down on the leaves like rain; the angry hiss of the wood-birds; the pine throwing out its pollen for the benefit of the next century; the turpentine exuding from the tree;—and indeed any vegetation, any animation, any and all are alike unattempted.

Build therefore your own world. This is wonderful, inspiriting, and for a naturalist of this hour like your reviewer, exists not when I go into the forest (and I do go) but only when I read Emerson's sentences. So, as one looks out the window, mildly depressed, and sees a group of scanty-clads whizzing frisbees back and forth about the campus, one needs as antidote these sentences from "The American Scholar" about the true function of a college: "They can only highly serve us when they aim not to drill, but to create; when they gather from far every ray of various genius to their hospitable halls, and by the concentrated fires, set the hearts of their youth on flame." For a moment the frisbees don't matter.

In his best writing, Emerson set his own heart on flame, that heart (or whatever one calls it) which, unlit, was in need of some kindling and enlivening. William James paid handsome tribute to him but spoke also—in a devastating phrase—of his "refined idiocy." The refined idiot is occasionally present in Allen's biography, as when, over dinner with Dickens and Carlyle during a visit to England, he is shocked by Dickens' saying (after Emerson had announced that young men in America "go virgins to their nuptial bed, as truly as their brides") that "if his son were especially chaste he would fear he was not in good health." Or there is the truly refined idiot as literary critic: "I am at a loss to understand why people hold Miss Austen's novels at so high a rate, which seem to me vulgar in tone, sterile in artistic invention, imprisoned in the wretched conditions of English society, without genius, wit, or knowledge of the world." The more he says, the more desperately he betrays his own inadequacies of genius, wit and knowledge. Chapman remarks that never in his life did Emerson feel "the normal appeal of any painting, or any sculpture, or any architecture or any music." They were symbols rather, with the result that "his books are full of blind places, like the notes which will not strike on a sick piano." It is with some such double sense of Emerson as, now

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stirring in his visionary eloquence, now hollow—the progenitor of Boy Scoutism and Christian Science—blind to the aesthetic, and morally obtuse as well, that we must experience him. But the reader who wants to take him up for another look should go not to Allen's biography but to the fine selection and commentary by Stephen Whicher in the Riverside paperback. "Truly speaking, it is not instruction, but provocation, that I can receive from another soul," said Emerson at his finest, in the "Divinity School Address." The attentive reader will surely be provoked, and in more than one way.

Allen tells us that Emerson "did not like Ruskin's gloomy view of the nineteenth century and modern civilization," and Joan Abse's fine new life of Ruskin[4] quotes a letter Emerson wrote home to Charles Eliot Norton after having visited Ruskin at Oxford, late in his life: "I cannot pardon him for a despondency so deep. It is detestable in a man of such powers, in a poet, a seer such as he has been." Since Emerson didn't know the half of it, he may perhaps himself be pardoned for his simple-minded response to what this new biography calls "a great and sad man." "His intellectual scope was enormous," says Joan Abse, "his penetrative and analytical gifts of the greatest variety and subtlety," not to mention his "relentless moral faculty." Emerson had evidently forgotten the lines from Wordsworth: "We Poets in our youth begin in gladness, / But thereof come in the end despondency and madness," and surely Ruskin had the temperament and feelings to land him in deeper trouble than Emerson could ever experience, even in "Experience": "The only thing grief has taught me is to know how shallow it is. That, like all the rest, plays about the surface, and never introduces me into the reality"—thus Emerson. But consider this utterance of Ruskin's: "Men ought to be severely disciplined and exercised in the sternest way in daily life—they should learn to lie on stone beds and eat black soup, but they should never have their hearts broken—a noble heart, once broken never mends." One hears in this a voice which has, and to its own horror, experienced the reality of grief. "I have hardly any real *warmth* of feeling, except for pictures and mountains," he said, doubtless apropos his unconsummated marriage with Effie Gray who was soon to leave him for the painter Millais. Abse writes well throughout about Ruskin's sexual frigidity, calling his capacity for sexual initiative "low," blaming the "parental bonds" that held him so close for so long: "My mother had never let me play cricket lest I should quicken my pulse, step into a boat lest I should fall out the other side, or learn to box lest I bleed at the nose." When he went up to Oxford, naturally mother accompanied him and took rooms to which he reported daily with an account of how things were going.

Abse doesn't mince words, naming the problem as one of "domi-

[4] JOHN RUSKIN: The Passionate Moralist, by *Joan Abse*. Knopf. $18.50.

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nation by the mother." That seems fair enough, but if the result was not "*warmth* of feeling," there was eventually a surfeit of coldness, darkness, black soup, and a feelingful despondency so deep Emerson couldn't pardon him for undergoing it. Still, late and earlier in his life, Ruskin managed to express kinds of perception beyond the reach of his American sagelike counterpart. The warmth of feeling he had for pictures and mountains poured into the pages of *Modern Painters* and *The Stones of Venice,* while he was responsive also to things in life which Emerson would have felt were beneath talking about, as with this description from an early letter to his father of the difficulties of writing (romantic poetry, such as his father hoped he would produce and that would outshine Byron): "Yesterday as I was drawing at St. Romano, a finely faced beggar came in with a dog on a string. He went to the holy water font, and crossed himself with an expression of devotion almost sublime, while at the same *instant,* the dog bestowed some water of a different kind on the *bottom* of the marble vessel so revered at the top. It was a perfect epitome of Italy as she *is*." In its amusing, sophisticated and (I'm afraid) European way, this comes out of a mind that takes history seriously, that knows some reasons why one can't just build therefore one's own world.

I am uncertain if the fact that Ruskin is more interesting to read *about* than Emerson, is due simply to Joan Abse's superiority as a writer to Gay Wilson Allen, or if—with all its extremities of rapturous aesthetic appreciation and high scornful detestation, of bliss and of misery (he certainly had his ups and downs)—Ruskin's life isn't in fact a good deal more interesting. At any rate, Abse treats the books he wrote as central to that life, and though, in the space of her sensibly modest 300-page compass, she can't talk about them all, she always makes a strong effort to demonstrate their individual nature and importance—whether of *Modern Painters* or *Fors Clavigera*—and she does so with the air of having read and caring that others should read them. One of the wisest tips to the potential reader of Ruskin is given in her introduction, when she concedes how daunting an obstacle the thirty-nine volumes of his *Collected Works* (edited so magnificently by Cook and Wedderburn) present; nevertheless she worries about extracts: "It is better, I fully admit, to read Ruskin in extract than not at all. But genius emasculated loses the aspect of genius and I would plead rather for the reader to seek out individual works and read them in their astonishing entirety. Only then can the full range and flavour of Ruskin's mind and the glorious richness of his prose be appreciated." Speaking as one who, to his discredit, has read few of those works in their entirety, I am certain she is right.

However much Ruskin lacked warmth of feeling in his life his writing abounds in it. Once taken by or swept off one's feet by the passionate voice, one never forgets it. Two examples, both from *The*

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Stones of Venice, the first in his denunciatory mood as he catalogues the historical decline in post-Renaissance painting:

> Instant degradation followed in every direction—a flood of folly and hypocrisy. Mythologies—ill-understood at first, then perverted into feeble sensualities, take the place of the representation of Christian subjects, which had become blasphemous under the treatment of men like the Caracci. Gods without power, satyrs without rusticity, nymphs without innocence, men without humanity, gather into idiotic groups upon the polluted canvas, and scenic affectations encumber the streets with preposterous marble. Lower and lower declines the level of abused intellect; the base school of landscape painting gradually usurps the place of the historical painting, which had sunk into prurient pedantry,—the Alsatian sublimities of Salvator, the confectionery idealities of Claude, the dull manufacture of Gaspar and Canaletto, south of the Alps, and in the north the patient devotion of besotted lives to delineation of bricks and fog, cattle and ditchwater.

As T. S. Eliot would say, the satire is more "creative" than critical, its fierce eloquence a matter of rhetorical cadence as much or more than diagnostic insight into history. The creative glow may be felt even more strongly in what I suppose is a purple passage, but whose strength makes it something besides "purple"—Ruskin's tribute to the Venetian spirit in its beginnings, which tribute he says may best be paid by going to the church at Torcello and ascending "the highest tier of the stern ledges that sweep round the altar":

> . . . and then, looking as the pilot did of old along the marble ribs of the goodly temple-ship, let him repeople its veined deck with the shadows of its dead mariners, and strive to feel in himself the strength of heart that was kindled within them, when first, after the pillars of it had settled in the sand, and the roof of it had been closed against the angry sky that was still reddened by the fires of their homesteads,—first, within the shelter of its knitted walls, amidst the murmur of the waste of waves and the beating of the wings of the sea-birds round the rock that was strange to them,—rose that ancient hymn, in the power of their gathered voices:
>
> THE SEA IS HIS, AND HE MADE IT:
> AND HIS HANDS PREPARED THE DRY LAND.

There are of course many other tones in his work, and Joan Abse says cogently, speaking of the later Ruskin of *Fors Clavigera,* that he discovered in himself a capacity "to write in an intimate, humorous, gently self-deprecating tone which charmed his readers into sympa-

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thy and involvement." She quotes a lovely moment from one of the letters in *Fors* where the author, out for a look at Furness Abbey, then waiting with his female companion for a train, falls into the company of some navvies who had partaken of "some refreshment at the tavern." Ruskin's companion calls them "an unmanageable sort of people," but the master went on to add

> Which, indeed I knew to be partly the truth, but it only made the thing seem to me more wrong than it did before, since here were not only the actual two or three dozen of unmanageable persons, with much taste for beer, and none for architecture; but these implied the existence of many unmanageable persons before and after them. They were a Fallen Race, every way incapable, as I acutely felt, of appreciating the beauty of 'Modern Painters,' or fathoming the significance of 'Fors Clavigera.'
>
> But what had they done to deserve their fall, or what had I done to deserve the privilege of being the author of those valuable books, remained obscure to me . . .

He expended much energy in attempting to penetrate that obscurity, just as he had earlier in order to understand the decline of painting and of Venice into their abjectly fallen condition.

The end was a long time coming, he lived into his eighties, lived through breakdown, despair, a loosening mind, visions of blackness (one visitor remembers his progress to bed, mounting the stairs and punctuating his ascent with "Damn, Damn, Damn, Damn, Damn, Damn)." But as he reiterated finally, in the epilogue to *Modern Painters,* completed in 1888 at his beloved Chamonix late in his life: "All great Art is Praise." Proust, who was to become himself a great praiser, wrote his obituary when Ruskin finally died in 1900, and Joan Abse's book, itself written in praise of a writer and spirit she much admires, helps us once more to make the sage live.

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JEFFREY MEYERS

H. D. and D. H.

HILDA DOOLITTLE IS THE LOU SALOMÉ, the Rupert Brooke of American literature, for her reputation is based more on her extraordinary beauty and literary friendships than on the quality of her work. Pound's fiancée, Aldington's wife, Lawrence's friend and Freud's patient, she usually appears as an obscure and elusive figure in the biographies of major writers. Touted now as "one of the most important figures of twentieth-century poetry," her "brilliant career" emerges from the shadows and into the fog of pseudo-biography.[1] Janice Robinson, who conducted very few interviews, provides subjective criticism dressed up as a scholarly life. Confused by the contents of her own mind, her book, like the world of Donne's "Anniversary," "is all in peeces, all cohaerence gone."

The muddled, repetitious, rambling and exasperating *H. D.* loses the pattern of its subject's life in labored explications of the poetry. Though H. D. (whose name was compressed to its Imagistic essence by Pound) is an extremely unreliable witness, Robinson's entire book is based on H. D.'s subjective impressions. There is no sense of the detailed reality of everyday existence: no clear description of H. D.'s education; little about relations with her brothers and sisters, with her husbands, daughter and grandchildren; almost nothing about her conversation, taste, dress, food, habits and health. Robinson "imaginatively" interprets the works to explain the life, instead of using the life to illuminate the work. Her peculiar approach makes H. D. a curiously disembodied spirit and gives the book a vague and abstract quality—like the slow dissolve of a film.

Yet this book is worth serious discussion for three reasons: its defects are symptomatic of now fashionable special pleading in modern biography; it has been praised even by so acutely perceptive a critic as Denis Donoghue, who called it (in the *New York Times Book Review* of February 14, 1982) an "extremely interesting and informative book"; and it will—unless corrected—be taken seriously and confuse the study of Pound, Aldington and Lawrence for some time to come. After the critical debris of this book is cleared away, a real biography, worthy of its subject, will have to be written.

H. D. was born into a Moravian family in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania in 1886 and grew up in Philadelphia where her father was Professor of Astronomy at the University of Pennsylvania. She met Pound, then a student at the university, in 1901; entered Bryn

[1] H. D.: The Life and Work of an American Poet, by *Janice Robinson*. Houghton Mifflin. $17.95.

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Mawr in 1904; became engaged to Pound in 1905; withdrew from Bryn Mawr "for reasons of health" in 1906. In 1907 Pound wrote a book of poems to her called *Hilda's Book*. With Pound "she felt too strong; the next moment, weak and broken." She suffered the high tension of an unconsummated union and wrote: "If he had simply bared teeth, torn away garments with bared fangs, she . . . would have yielded to him." But he restrained the anticipated ferocity and merely kissed her. Her family was bitterly opposed to Pound (who guided her reading after she left college) as a prospective husband. Robinson offers no elucidation of the close connection between her love for Pound and her illness.

H. D. refused to elope with Pound to Venice in 1908; but he renewed their broken engagement, convinced her to come to London in 1911 and severed her from friends and family. In 1912 Pound read her first poems, slashed them with a pencil, scrawled "H. D., Imagiste" at the bottom of the page and sent them to Harriet Monroe to be published in *Poetry*. Pound generously launched H. D.'s literary career: he encouraged, admired, improved, praised and placed her work, as he did for Eliot and many other modern poets. There is no indication that H. D. objected to her pseudonym (based on A. E. for George Russell), to her connection with the Imagist poets or to the appearance of her work in an excellent magazine. But Robinson interprets Pound's help as an attack on H. D.: "Pound's immediate response was to edit her, slash her, and put her up on public display as his 'discovery.' . . . She was shocked and traumatized by his . . . psychic violence."

Robinson claims, with characteristic exaggeration, that H. D.'s early poems were "widely acclaimed . . . as pathbreaking" (by whom?); that "Pound and H. D. were creating a modern metaphysical poetry." But the Imagists' emphasis on the direct treatment of the thing was static, inhibiting and intellectually limited. Conrad Aiken criticized the "meticulous clear lines [that] run / In hideous insipidity"; Pound referred to his own early poems as "a collection of stale cream puffs."

When Pound (then in his troubadour phase) rejected H. D. for Dorothy Shakespear, H. D. refused the role of mistress-muse and married Aldington on the rebound in 1913. Aldington, then in love with the married Brigit Patmore, cynically suggested that he hastily married H. D. only because she had missed a period. She was sexually frigid, and had a stillborn child in 1915. Aldington, transformed by his experience in the War, began to live with Dorothy Yorke (also from Pennsylvania) in 1917—when the fragile marriage collapsed.

H. D. met Lawrence in 1914; after his expulsion from Cornwall, he and Frieda lived in the Aldingtons' flat at 44 Mecklenburgh Square from October 20 to about December 1, 1917. Robinson makes some large—totally unsubstantiated—claims about their rela-

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tionship. She states that Lawrence and H. D. were lovers; that Lawrence was probably the father of her child, born in 1919; that *Lady Chatterley's Lover* "is essentially the story of H. D. 's life from 1914 to 1918"; that the priestess of Isis in *The Man Who Died* is based on H. D.; that Aldington, through his own work on Lawrence and his influence on the Lawrence biographies by Nehls and Moore, jealously and effectively suppressed the real story of D. H. and H. D. If all this were true, it would radically change our understanding of Lawrence's life and work. But none of these wild claims are supported by facts. Biographers, like lawyers, should be required to study Evidence.

Robinson uses *Bid Me to Live*, H. D.'s *roman à clef* (more *clef* than *roman*) as the primary evidence for H. D.'s relations with Lawrence, and free associates from that work. ("We think of . . . ," "We will recall . . . ," "We remember . . . ," invariably warn of bizarre reasoning.) The central issue of this factually unreliable novel "is H. D.'s unwillingness to go up the stairs to the room Lawrence occupied [with Frieda] during his stay at her flat in the winter of 1917." According to Robinson, Lawrence "repudiated H. D.'s touch at Mecklenburgh Square [and] . . . made the decision not to share his life with her." When H. D.'s love was offered and "rejected," she ran away to Cornwall with the caddish composer, Cecil Gray. Lawrence, who disliked Gray and was angry that she had left Aldington, told her: "I hope never to see you again." He sent another angry letter to her in August 1929: "It's more than ten years since we met, and what should we have to say? . . . Nothing, really. . . . The breakage has already happened." H. D. told her lesbian lover and patron, Bryher Ellerman, that she had never slept with Lawrence. From this unpromising material, Robinson leaps to wild conclusions. She insists Lawrence and H. D. "were bound to each other from the time of their first meeting," speaks of H. D.'s "affair with Lawrence" and claims "in that relation she had sacrificed everything and lost. . . . H. D. had kicked over her marriage for Lawrence."

The account of the paternity of H. D.'s child is even more tortuous. (There is no consecutive discussion of this or any other crucial issue; the "argument" must be pieced together from various bits that appear throughout the book.) H. D. never discussed the paternity of Perdita, who still does not know the identity of her father. Aldington and most other people thought Cecil Gray, H. D.'s lover in Cornwall, was the father; Gray neither admitted nor denied it. H. D., who forgot Lawrence's letter of 1929, said: "He never wrote to me again after I told him I was expecting this child." But in a letter of December 28, 1918 to Amy Lowell (not quoted by Robinson), Lawrence expressed sympathetic concern: "[Hilda] is going to have another child, it appears. I hope she will be all right. Perhaps she can get more settled, for her nerves are very shaken: and perhaps the child will soothe and steady her. I hope it will." When the

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child was born, Lawrence told Koteliansky that Gray was "behaving wretchedly." Robinson astonishingly concludes from all this: "There is some reason to believe that Gray covered for Lawrence by not denying that he might be the father." But Lawrence was not the father of H. D.'s child. H. D. kept the paternity a mystery either because she wanted the child to be Lawrence's but knew it was Gray's or because she had slept with Gray and another man and did not know who the father really was.

Robinson claims that "Lawrence took responsibility in his work for the birth." Unaware that the earthy gamekeeper in *John Thomas and Lady Jane* (the first version of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*) is very similar to the gamekeeper Annable in Lawrence's first novel, *The White Peacock* (1910), Robinson argues that *John Thomas* is based on H. D. because his description of a hut matches her description of one. Robinson says the paternity of Connie Chatterley's child is *un*certain; but Connie tells her husband, her sister and her father that Mellors is her lover. Robinson feebly argues: "Like Aldington, Sir Clifford is a writer. Like Aldington he fought in World War I." But Aldington was not paralyzed and impotent; nor was the lusty Connie, like H. D., frigid and bisexual.

Robinson follows the misleading suggestion of Stephen Guest—certainly no authority on Lawrence—that H. D. was the model for the priestess of Isis. Though H. D. was not convinced of this theory, Robinson absurdly insists that Caesar is Pound, the Levant is Cornwall and the motif of Christ's wounds "corresponds with this central symbolic motif of the Moravian devotions." Though Robinson fantasizes about Lawrence's fiction, she never mentions the satirical portrait of H. D. as Julia Cunningham in *Aaron's Rod.*

Robinson's discussion of Lawrence is also filled with factual errors. She speaks of Devon and Cornwall, the west of England, as "southern England" (rather like Arizona as southern America); calls George Zytaruk "Daryl"; spells Ivy Bolton's name incorrectly; and asserts that Aldington destroyed Frieda's letters to him, though they were published in her *Memoirs and Correspondence* (1964) and in *Frieda Lawrence and Her Circle* (1981). Robinson's critical language combines current cant with extreme banality: "They were able to share the experience and communicate their feelings at a deep level. . . . She and Lawrence were in touch with something very primal."

H. D. could never sustain relations with any man. In 1919, after the break with Pound, Aldington, Lawrence and Gray, her affective life came to an end. Her marriage broke up in 1917, her brother was killed in France in 1918, her father died in 1919, she had double pneumonia in 1919 and nearly died in childbirth. She had a nervous and physical breakdown in 1919, followed by a hallucinating vision on a cruise ship in 1920. She turned for emotional sustenance to Bryher, the daughter of a shipping magnate; and spent

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the rest of her life writing obsessively about Lawrence and the destruction of her personal life in the War. In 1922 she moved with Bryher to Switzerland, a country, Fitzgerald observed, "where few things begin but many things end."

Bryher loved H. D., who was not attracted to her and found it a great strain to live and sleep with her. In 1926 H. D. had an affair with Kenneth Macpherson. Bryher bought him out and married him (her second unconsummated marriage). All three lived together; and Macpherson directed a film, *Borderline* (1930), starring H. D. and Paul Robeson. Robinson tells us nothing of this strange ménage and nothing about the film.

In 1933–34 Bryher paid for H. D.'s analysis with Freud, who confidently told her: "If I had known Ezra, I could have made him all right." Bryher demanded and received detailed reports which formed the basis of H. D.'s fuzzy *Tribute to Freud.* Freud diagnosed bisexuality and penis-envy. Bryher's father made this easier to swallow by leaving her £8000 in 1934, and Bryher added another £20,000 in 1945. H. D. celebrated this gift with her third nervous breakdown in 1946, when she was institutionalized by her benefactor. She spent her last eight years in Küsnacht on the Zürichsee (did she know Thomas Mann who lived there from 1952–55?); had abdominal surgery (for what ailment?) in 1952; took trips to America in the 1950s (when and where?); died after a stroke in 1961.

How do we evaluate H. D. as a writer? She lacks the essential quality of a novelist: the ability to create an imaginative world and bring her characters to life. Her prose is filled with self-indulgent passages: "Tree on tree on tree. TREE. I am the Tree of Life. Tree. I am a tree planted by the rims of water. I am. . . . I am. . . . Her exactly." The content of her poetry is romantic, despite the Greek trappings that resemble stage props at a school play. Pound, Aldington and Lawrence keep turning up in *Ben Hur* settings wearing togas and sandals. H. D.'s poetry is always narcissistic and ultimately self-reductive. Even Robinson admits: "When she writes a poem about Thetis or Lais or Cassandra, she is using these all as personae for herself. . . . Every work [is] a variation on 'the novel' or 'the story' as she lived it in World War I."

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JAY PARINI

The Happy Genius of His Household

> How much virtue there is in simply seeing!
> —Thoreau, *Journals*, 9 April 1841

> In the composition, the artist does exactly what every eye must do with life, fix the particular with the universality of his own personality.
> —Williams, *Spring and All*

PAUL MARIANI'S RECENT LIFE of William Carlos Williams, *A New World Naked*,[1] is a work of homage. It is generous in every sense: full of details—more than most readers will care to digest—and sympathetic to the poet's complex struggle with the materials of his art. A poet himself, Mariani writes with unusual insight into the way writers transmogrify ordinary (and sometimes tawdry) objects of their lives into poetic subjects. His complete absorption in the poet's bizarrely varied *oeuvre*, which includes verse, autobiography, criticism, fiction, and plays, ballasts a work that would otherwise tip over from sheer bulk. The nearly eight hundred pages of this book run at full sail, the tail wind being Mariani's relentlessly polemical style. He is determined to prove two things—that Williams is a major poet, one who stands shoulder-to-shoulder with Pound, Eliot, Stevens, and Frost; and that Williams got a rough deal from the critics, who persistently neglected or underrated him until the end.

Mariani has chronicled the response to Williams in an earlier book, *William Carlos Williams: The Poet and His Critics*,[2] a sad but common tale of critical imperviousness to new work. As Williams himself wrote: "The best work is always neglected and there is no critic among the older men who has cared to champion the newer names from outside the battle. The established critic will not read. So it is that the present writers must turn interpreters of their own work." It was so for Eliot and Pound, of course, although they (in Eliot's formulation) "created the taste by which they could be judged." But unlike either of these great modernists, Williams was a rather disjointed critic with a limited range; he lacked a generalizing impulse of the order which can really prepare the way for original work. Nevertheless, criticism did catch up with Williams—even

[1] WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS: A New World Naked, by *Paul Mariani*. McGraw-Hill. $24.95; $12.95.

[2] WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS: The Poet and His Critics, by *Paul Mariani*. American Library Association. $14.95.

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during his lifetime—and by the fifties he was entrenched as an established modernist, seen for what I think he is: an extremely fine poet, an original one, but a lesser figure in every sense than Eliot, Pound, Frost, or Stevens. *Paterson* was written too much in opposition to *The Waste Land* and *The Cantos*, too much as a bid for the ultimate long American poem. As Randall Jarrell famously observed, the poem grows steadily worse; it is marred by its eccentricity, its lack of coherence, its manifest self-indulgence. Williams definitely lost his "one-sided war with Eliot." But for all that, he left behind a cluster of lyrics which count among the permanent treasures of American literature (I would personally nominate for his best poems "Spring and All," "Danse Russe," "The Rose," "To Elsie," "Young Sycamore," "Rain," "The Quality of Heaven," "The Descent," "Asphodel, That Greeny Flower" and "Pictures from Breughel").

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Williams' early career, as told by Mariani, is the friendship with Pound. They met at the University of Pennsylvania in 1902. Williams was studying to become a doctor, which he became, maintaining a practice in New Jersey until his retirement after a stroke in 1951. Pound was studying to be what he became: the major-domo of modern poetry. In novelistic fashion, Mariani recounts a symbolic scene in their relationship. Williams was visiting Pound's home. As they entered through the vestibule,

> Pound—in his best imitation Italian fencing manner—pulled two walking canes from the ornate umbrella stand there, tossed one to Williams, and told him to be on guard. At once the two of them were at it: thrust, parry, counterthrust, the click-click of stick on stick, as Williams, the better swordsman, checked each of Pound's wild lungings. And then Pound was swinging at Williams' head until, suddenly, he hurled himself at him with all his force, nearly putting Williams' eye out. Williams, feeling the pain under his eye, screamed and put down his sword. Enough was enough. Pound had made his point.

Always the brilliant amateur, ready to seize the occasion and to demonstrate his skill, Pound knew how to keep Williams in his place. Williams, who had in fact been on the fencing team at Penn, held back, knowing he could have "shoved the stick through his mouth and out at his ass hole if it had been important enough to do so" (or so said the humiliated poet in a letter some years later). The fact is that Williams stayed in a position of subservience to Pound, depending on his friend to get his poems published, always in a vaguely repressed state of bitterness. He was also an admirer of Pound. In 1932 he wrote to a friend:

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> So far I believe that Pound's line in his *Cantos*—there is something *like* what we shall achieve. Pound in his mould, a medieval inspiration, patterned on a substitution of medieval simulacra for a possible, not yet extant modern and living material, has made a pre-composition for us. Something which when later (perhaps) packed and realized in living, breathing stuff will (in its changed form) be the thing.

It was Williams' exploration of the *genius loci* of northern New Jersey that separated him from Pound, enabling him to quarry Pound's "pre-composition" in order to produce what he considered "in its living, breathing stuff" to be "the thing."

But if the friendship with Pound seems the most interesting aspect of Williams' early life, the most important was surely his medical career. As nearly everybody who reads poetry knows, Williams was a pediatric doctor in Rutherford, New Jersey, where he lived from 1910 until his death in 1963. His address was always 9 Ridge Row, which in a time when most people change their address once every two years may be the most striking point here. No wonder Williams' poetry speaks to us now, being *rooted* in the best sense, recording how one man was able to choose a place, establish himself there in the practice of citizenship, become responsibly conscious of its nature and people. Williams' chief rebellion was against the internationalism that Eliot and Pound seemed to herald. While attracted to Pound's exhortation to "make it new," he had an inward sense that newness wasn't everything. In "Asphodel, That Greeny Flower," he wrote:

> Look at
> what passes for the new.
> You will not find it there but in
> despised poems.
> It is difficult
> to get the news from poems
> yet men die miserably every day
> for lack
> of what is to be found there.

Like his other great friend, Wallace Stevens, who was also rooted in a particular place for most of his working life, he understood "How gladly with proper words the soldier dies, / If he must, or lives on the bread of faithful speech."

Living on the bread of faithful speech, Williams went about his business with unusual gusto. He married Florence Herman, the truest love of his life besides poetry itself, in 1912. He raised a family. He ushered countless local babies into the world and ministered to countless others through any number of illnesses and crises. The

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flavor of this immensely busy life inheres nicely in a letter to his son, who was also a doctor, in 1942:

> These last two weeks have been buggers. The principal cause of this has been a strep throat infection that starts without many physical signs other than prostration and high fever. . . . Ran into a lousy case of a ruptured appendix, badly neglected, in a twenty-six-year-old woman, seven months pregnant. Carlisle opened her up day before yesterday. General peritonitis, the appendix rotted off. . . . Delivered a nine pound 13½ oz. kid the other day from a woman who weighed only 93 pounds a year ago. Low forceps. I broke the clavicle getting the shoulders out. Everything's all right though. I've been going nuts.

The question is, how did Williams every manage to write anything, let alone the hundreds of poems, four novels, critical essays and books, prose poems, plays, and so on? The answer, perhaps, has something to do with the rootedness. His poetry and other writings were curiously of a piece with the life itself.

He was, however, no mere "confessional" or autobiographical poet. As Emerson said, "There is no history. There is only biography," by which he hoped to call attention to the fact that an artist's real life occurs in the writings and not in the details of his life. "The life of a great artist always is thus inward," Emerson said elsewhere, "a life of no events. Shakespeare has no biography worth seeking. Dante by how much he had a biography is so much the worse artist." As a good woodstove burns up its own smoke, so the good poet consumes the details of his life in the act of composition. Little is left for inspection. And so Williams was able to transmute the raw materials of biography into real poems, as Mariani shows repeatedly. For example, Mariani describes the image of Williams' young bride, Flossie, approaching the altar to take her vows on December 12, 1912. She approached him "in her white gown, virginal, 'pale as a ghost.' " The marriage certainly had its ups and downs, with Williams' unfaithfulness often at the source of these vicissitudes, but nevertheless he could return to this primal scene of union at the end of his life, in "Asphodel"—

> At the altar
> so intent was I
> before my vows,
> so moved by your presence
> a girl so pale
> and ready to faint
> that I pitied
> and wanted to protect you.
> As I think of it now,

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after a lifetime
it is as if
a sweet-scented flower
were poised
and for me did open.

The event itself is consumed in the poet's refining fire.

Mariani, as I have said, is partisan. He wants strongly to suggest that Williams was thoroughly misunderstood and badly treated: "All his life," he writes, "as he worked his way up from under, Williams had been rejected, dismissed, laughed at, patronized—like most revolutionaries." To some extent this is accurate. Williams never got the acclaim or readership he deserved until late in life (when he did, in fact, get as much as anyone could ask for). The problem was that there *was* something revolutionary about the poems. In a very early review of *Sour Grapes* (1921) the critic Kenneth Burke hit upon it nicely: "There is the eye, and there is the thing upon which the eye alights; while the relationship existing between the two is a poem." This immediacy of vision, unmediated by any dimension of symbolism, had little to do with post-romantic poetics, wherein the object perceived is readily meant to suggest another realm that stands "behind" it. Williams points to no other world. Take, for example, "The Term":

A rumpled sheet
of brown paper
about the length

and apparent bulk
of a man was
rolling with the

wind slowly over
and over in
the street as

a car drove down
upon it and
crushed it to

the ground. Unlike
a man it rose
again rolling

with the wind over
and over to be as
it was before.

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This is a poetry of pure observation, and it has nothing to do with Emerson's "transparent eyeball," which quickly leaps to assume the synecdochic relatedness of all things in nature.

This does not mean that Williams' poetry is one-dimensional, as many of his imitators have assumed (thereby producing some of the flattest poetry in the history of literature). J. Hillis Miller has shrewdly commented, "His poetry can give itself to calm description because all objects are already possessed from the beginning." In naming the objects, the poet entirely releases himself to them, without symbolism or depth or reference to a world beyond. The dialogic tension of *I* and *Thou* is simply not in question. As Williams said elsewhere, there is "interpenetration, both ways." The brown paper reeling in the wind is separate from the wind, which is separate from the street and the car and the man who is not like the paper in "The Term." All things are subjective and objective at once in Williams' idiosyncratic world, all part of his "approximate co-extension with the universe." In a letter to Marianne Moore he described his original discovering of "co-extension" or union as "something which occurred once when I was about twenty, a sudden resignation to existence, a despair—if you wish to call it that, but a despair which made everything a unit and at the same time a part of myself. I suppose it might be called a sort of nameless religious experience. I resigned, I gave up." In assuming this strange union of all things, and therefore resigning himself to the material facts of existence without further reference, Williams stands out as an early revolutionist of the kind that would anticipate, in different ways, such diverse contemporaries as Mark Rothko or Nathalie Sarraute.

Williams gave himself up to life entirely, which included giving himself up to language and the life of the spirit. No more intimate glimpse of this process exists in his work than in "Danse Russe":

> If when my wife is sleeping
> and the baby and Kathleen
> are sleeping
> and the sun is a flame-white disc
> in silken mists
> above shining trees,—
> if I in my north room
> dance naked, grotesquely
> before my mirror
> waving my shirt round my head
> and singing softly to myself:
> "I am lonely, lonely.
> I was born to be lonely,
> I am best so!"
> If I admire my arms, my face,

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my shoulders, flanks, buttocks
against the yellow drawn shades,—

Who shall say I am not
the happy genius of my household?

A poet in the romantic tradition of mirror-turned-lamp would have otherwise maneuvered the objects of this poem: wife, baby, Kathleen (the housekeeper), the sun, wanting to suggest some occult relationship between all things, sleeping and waking. Williams, quite oppositely, insists upon the loneliness of each fact. He holds a mirror up to nothing but his own dance, which is the mark of his own genius and the making of his joy.

In some ways Mariani's book argues against itself. It focuses on the struggle, the vicissitudes in marriage, the lack of recognition, the general hubbub of a doctor's life, but also presents enough raw data to the contrary that I am left unconvinced that Williams got an unfair deal. He was able to write what he wanted. He had plenty of good friends, enough money to live decently, a warm family. He was not entirely without recognition, even early on. Pound helped him by getting Elkin Mathews to publish his second book, *The Tempers*, as early as 1913. There were always reviews, of varying quality, but sometimes perceptive and encouraging. *Poetry Magazine* gave him a big prize in 1931. And in his last years a stream of gifted young poets sat dazedly at his feet. (See Robert Lowell's tribute to Williams in THE HUDSON REVIEW, Vol. XIV, No. 4, Winter, 1961-62.) Finally, he received the Pulitzer Prize before his death in 1963. I don't think he should have, or did, ask for more.

After his death, his wife Flossie wrote to Marianne Moore that she and Bill had had a good life together, fifty years of it, in "all but the last few years when he could no longer read—write or at last . . . talk." She called them "years to treasure—full of companionship—partnership—ups and downs—in fact a *life*." Mariani has brought us into closer touch with the world available to this poet's remarkable eye, and thus closer to the poetry itself.

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DANA GIOIA

Poetry Chronicle

FIRST COLLECTIONS OF POETRY usually get little or no attention—perhaps a few short notices before they disappear forever. But over the last twelve months a series of exceptional first books has caught the attention of the literary scene. There have been laudatory reviews in all sorts of unexpected places, from *Time* to *The New Republic*. Even *People* inexplicably ran an omnibus poetry review, though reassuringly it mixed up some of the poets' photos so that the informed reader didn't feel things had changed too much. (And yet with the *National Enquirer* publishing the verse of John Hinckley, Jr., perhaps the popular press may be about to give the highbrow quarterlies some serious competition in promoting the work of promising young poets.) The first book boom started in mid-1981 with Jared Carter's *Work, For the Night Is Coming* and continued through mid-1982 with Brad Leithauser's extravagantly praised *Hundreds of Fireflies*, but there were many impressive volumes in between, including Gjertrud Schnackenberg's *Portraits and Elegies*, Edward Hirsch's *For the Sleepwalkers*, Mary Kinzie's *The Threshold of the Year*, Alan Shapiro's *After the Digging*, Elizabeth Spires's *Globe*, Nicholas Christopher's *On Tour with Rita*, Denis Johnson's *Incognito Lounge*, Douglas Crase's *The Revisionist*, and Katha Pollitt's *Antarctic Traveller*. Not all of these volumes are equally deserving, but collectively they seemed to represent a rejuvenation of American poetry just when many established poets were slipping unexpectedly into a premature literary dotage. In contrast with the stale, sloppy and self-parodying work of their elders, these precise, polished, and surprisingly accessible volumes promised an exciting new beginning.

Curiously, however, amid this year-long celebration of debuts what is possibly the most distinguished first collection of them all has, to my knowledge, received no attention whatsoever. The book in question is David Barton's *Surviving the Cold*, a collection so strong it tempts one to hyperbole. First books simply aren't supposed to be so powerful or fully achieved. One might ask why no one has noticed it, but the reason isn't hard to find. *Surviving the Cold* is not a separate collection but one section of the *Quarterly Review of Literature*'s third poetry series volume.[1] Barton shares his space with four other poets. Without the focus of an individual volume or the aegis of a mainstream publisher, critics have not

[1] QUARTERLY REVIEW OF LITERATURE: Poetry Series III, ed. *T.* and *R. Weiss*. $20.00; $7.50.

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deemed him worthy of serious attention despite the *Quarterly Review of Literature*'s thirty-five year reputation for excellence.

Barton's poetry is distinguished by its imagination, authority, and ruthless intelligence. His quick imagination shows itself in his imagery and metaphors. His poetry is exciting line by line, making powerful, unexpected but never inappropriate leaps from image to image. One rarely sees in first volumes so much invention compressed into single poems. This richness even distinguishes his failures. When Barton's poems miscarry, they do so from a surfeit of riches, breaking apart into collections of brilliant lines and images. A poem like "Journal Entry," for example, is ultimately unsuccessful, but what a failure it is—filled with lines that any poet would envy. Barton's authority comes from his command of tone and rhythm in verse. Whereas most contemporary poets adopt a flat, evasive tone in their work which consciously or unconsciously is echoed in their uncertain rhythms, Barton knows exactly what he is about even when it approaches madness or despair. The tone of his voice is securely established in each poem, and the rhythms are definite and forceful. He does not conceive his rhythms line by line but plans them over the whole structure of the poem. Each piece moves so skillfully to its end that it is difficult *not* to finish a Barton poem once one has begun it. His poems also display a ruthless intelligence as he pushes each thought to its conclusion, however shocking or unpleasant it may be. Although he feels that poetry "praises whatever is," he is not willing to romanticize the tragic side of existence. He is not a poet who gratuitously seeks violence or despair, but when he confronts it, he will not turn away. His poems sometimes end in anger or savagery, as in "Late Autumn" or "July in North Georgia," but these emotions are always earned.

The impact of *Surviving the Cold* comes not only from the individual excellence of the poems, but also from its overall structure. Whereas most first books are miscellanies—a sort of haphazard literary growth chart recording poems from every stage of an author's development—Barton's book successfully orders his work into a meaningful sequence. The poems are presented as discrete pieces, but reading them sequentially one feels a progression toward an overall imaginative goal. Barton divides the book into four parts, each relating to a region. The first section, "Surviving the Cold," takes place in New England where he was born and raised. The next section deals with Georgia where he taught for several years; the third section with a Europe both real ("Yorkshire") and imaginary ("Homage to Agatha Christie" or "German Woodcuts"). The final section depicts the landscape of California. The progress is not only geographical. Each region comes to represent a stage in Barton's life, a complex mix of moods and memories. New England is an inferno of family guilt set against an exhausted landscape and culture. North Georgia is a macabre purgatory where the poet pain-

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fully gains perspective on himself and his origins. The European poems provide cultural archetypes of what Barton should or should not become, as in this warning from the minor aesthete, Theodore Wratislaw, who, like a character from Dante, speaks from beyond the grave:

> But wasn't it enough then
> to celebrate the ephemeral
> with excessive design,
> and the dark repose
> of too many summer gardens
> scented with woodbine
> and roses that shook apart
> like little harlots?
>
> ....
>
> But consider my place now;
> it thickens with blanched lilies
> and late blooming violets,
> the mute morning birds
> and a harmless garden snake
> who slithers toward my stone
> with corrupted grace,
> moving among the uninspired,
> laughing a little, making
> little suggestive noises
> with the insidious lifting
> of an endless neck.

And finally, there is "The Western Door," a series of poems about California which although no paradise provides the poet with the clarity to see himself and a landscape which provides what Wordsworth called the "renovating virtue" of nature.

There are occasionally some influences discernible in Barton's work, touches of Lowell, Auden, Tomlinson, Connor, and perhaps Davie, but there is never any question of who is in charge. Barton appropriates what he needs and reshapes it as his own. One is reminded of Eliot's dictum that minor poets borrow whereas major poets steal, and while it would be ridiculous at this point to call Barton a major poet, he does have a large talent—a hungry, omnivorous imagination that has digested the work of his elders and is intent on matching it. It will be interesting to watch the development of Barton's career. Voracious talent like his can as easily go off into idiosyncrasy as into sustained achievement. But as of now he has at least one excellent volume to his credit and at least ten poems as perfect as this one, titled "Vermeer":

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The swept tiles and flat mapped walls,
the streets of Delft where light
is always the protagonist,
the beamed ceilings, the women poised

before an open window,
pausing to draw something, pour water
into some wholly immaculate bowl—
these, at last, no longer mattered.

It seems the details we recognize—
cupboard, door, a pet goldfinch—
are tempered by that domestic hush
we know to be unreal. Houses,

even Dutch houses, know the strife
of ancillary wives, indignant sons.
But in a room closed off from others,
in summer, when the light has risen

and every object is in place,
birds will angle through the far sky
and someone will turn to open the shutters,
dark and pellucid at once.

This volume of the *Quarterly Review of Literature* also contains four other collections of poetry. Two are translations: So Chongju's *Winter Sky,* translated by David McCann from the Korean; and Carlos Nejar's *Yoke: Jesualdo Monte,* translated from the Portuguese by Madeleine Picciotto. The remaining two are Phyllis Thompson's *What the Land Gave* and Mairi MacInnes' *Herring, Oatmeal, Milk, and Salt.* Of these the strongest is the MacInnes collection, a remarkable reappearance from a poet whose last volume was published twenty-six years ago. MacInnes' book is a complex collection of three dozen poems arranged around her title piece, a personal essay on the sources of her poetry. This unusual mixture of prose and poetry works very well. The prose provides her poetry with a context that puts it into perspective. The poetry validates the observations on writing contained in her essay.

MacInnes was born in the north of England but has lived in the U.S. for twenty-five years, and much of her poetry deals with reconciling these two parts of her life. Her poetry is sometimes very personal, but it is never private, and while ideas are important to her work, her poems are always based on careful observation. Her best work weds intelligence to experience and deserves careful attention, as in "Hardly Anything Bears Watching," which begins:

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Hardly anything bears watching.
Bricks and stone
Have lost their intense surprise.
For years I kept my trust in things . . .

And ends:

Picture after picture fails.
When I was young,
The pavement kerbs were made of stone,
A substance like my finger-nails.

It is not like that any more.
I do not see
The essential life of inorganic things.
Humanity has covered all.

"Transatlantic" is usually used by critics as a disparaging term for the characterless work done by writers who have moved so much between England and America that they have lost touch with any specific reality. But MacInnes' poetry seems transatlantic in an entirely positive sense, combining an intensely English feeling for place and landscape with a hard, American style. She has learned from the New World without losing touch with the Old. Anyone familiar with the many dreary volumes by English poets living in America and Americans in England can testify that this is no small accomplishment. One hopes we will not have to wait another quarter-century for MacInnes' next volume.

Katha Pollitt has an extraordinarily good ear. Her lines are almost always exactly right, and there is a sense of finish and finality to her work one rarely sees nowadays in poets young or old—the diction clean and precise, the rhythms clear and effective. One can hear all of these virtues in "Blue Window," the opening poem of her *Antarctic Traveller.*[2] It begins:

That longing you have to be invisible,
transparent as glass, thin air—
that is what moves you certain times to tears
watching the evening fill with city lights
and the long dusty summer avenues
rise weightless through the air
and tremble like constellations in a sky
so deep and clear you are your one desire,
Oh, let me be that blue . . .

[2] ANTARCTIC TRAVELLER, by *Katha Pollitt.* Knopf. $11.50; $5.95.

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Pollitt is also refreshing in that she is not afraid to write beautifully. She has a fine sensibility and does not try to hide it under a hard or aggressive mask. She is original enough to shun the predictable clichés of "beautiful" description and carefully avoids sentimentality when presenting emotions. As a result she can create bewitchingly effective scenes when she chooses, as in "Moon and Flowering Plum" from her "Five Poems from Japanese Paintings":

> A huge moon rises behind branches
> stippled with white plum flowers, cold and frail,
> like snow in early spring. Suddenly
> it is that moment you have longed for,
> you overflow like a cup,
> like the moon overflowing with whiteness.
> Could you live like that,
> moving from incandescence to incandescence
> as courtly viewers of plum flowers
> proceed from one white orchard to the next?
> Or would you find
> their formal robes too stiff, the moon too slow,
> the orchards, when you reached them,
> muddy and full of frogs?

One needn't remember Marianne Moore's definition of poetry as "imaginary gardens with real toads in them" to know that "Moon and Flowering Plum" is the genuine article. This poem, however, not only illustrates Pollitt's style but also her aesthetic. For her, poetry is primarily the recreation and examination of those small epiphanies which suddenly illuminate one's life. In the previous poem, for example, the "you" experiences a rush of heightened perception in a moonlit orchard and wonders what it would be like to sustain this peak experience—"to burn always with this hard, gemlike flame," as it were. In another of the Japanese painting poems, "Whose Sleeves?," an elegant society woman sees "her own top-heavy elaborate self" reflected in a cup of tea and suddenly decides to run away from her comfortable home. *Du musst dein Leben ändern,* the silent imperative of Rilke's archaic torso of Apollo, "You must change your life," seems echoed throughout Pollitt's work. But it is only in these imagined poems, however, that she can translate illumination into action. In those poems which seem to be more directly based on her personal experience she can feel the unexpected moments of enlightenment but they find no release, only a transitory heightening of awareness for the world around her. The epiphany diminishes into an *aperçu,* and her poems become brilliantly fluid renditions of a passive imagist aesthetic. At these times one suspects that Pollitt undersells her conspicuous talent by not pursuing the perceptions further—wherever they may lead.

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This latent strain of aestheticism dictates the nature of Pollitt's successes. She is at her enviable best in those poems which she can treat as closed systems—musical compositions sealed off from the world which she can perfect measure by measure, bringing every word or image into resolution with some underlying harmony. Her striking poem, "Of the Scythians," for instance, literally approaches the conditions of music and could profitably be analyzed in strictly musical terms independent of its meaning. Likewise her five beautiful poems on Japanese paintings present Pollitt's skillful transposition from one closed system to another. (I have never seen a translation by Pollitt, but I suspect her extraordinary verbal gift would make her an ideal translator.) When Pollitt's poems do not work, it is usually because some foreign elements intruded which she could not control. In "Failure" a wonderful beginning is undermined by a few lines in the second half which destroy the tone. But if this perfectionism and quest for control limits Pollitt's range, it is also the source of her strength. She is an exceptionally accomplished young poet who has mastered her craft. She is a poet to watch, and *Antarctic Traveller* is definitely a volume to acquire.

Elizabeth Spires's *Globe*[3] is a fine first collection from a poet with a refreshingly honest view of herself and the world around her. Most of Spires's poems are personal meditations about love or childhood. She draws a scene, usually from memory, makes it vivid with a few striking details, and then often caps the poem through an unexpected twist that puts the scene in some new perspective. In the title poem, for instance, she recreates a day when she was four years old and her father returned from work to bring her a globe as a surprise present. The reader follows a series of cunningly exact details only to be told near the end that:

> Memory's false as anything, spliced in the wrong parts,
> queerly jumping. But better than forgetting.

But no sooner has the illusion of verisimilitude been broken by the author's doubting voice, than it is once again adopted, this time from an adult perspective that can confidently bridge the gap of years:

> We walked out into the soft light of October, leaves
> sticking to our shoes like gold paper.
> I was four years old and he was twenty-five,
> same age as I am writing this.

Spires's personal poems, which fill two thirds of *Globe*, are both accomplished and engaging, but if they were the only pieces in the

[3] GLOBE, by *Elizabeth Spires*. Wesleyan University Press. $5.95p.

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book, the volume would ultimately seem an extremely talented but ordinary affair. She writes better than most of her contemporaries but largely in the same way. Midway through the volume, however, the reader comes across a sudden darkening of mood and imagery that proves Spires is anything but ordinary. One notices this change most clearly in the haunting set of poems that make up the middle section of her volume, but there are also earlier hints of the fascinating gothic side of Spires's imagination. In "Catchpenny Road," for example, an evening walk at the end of summer turns into an excursion into the land of the dead.

> Blackened by frost, leaves
> blow over the pond,
> absorbing the water's stain,
> sinking toward the stars' reflections.
> You kneel, smooth the water
> with your hands, and say nothing.
> The dead surround us, holding
> stones in their hands like coins.
> Money they would lend us.

It is mainly the nine poems that comprise the middle section of *Globe,* however, that show Spires at her most distinctive. Here she creates a memorable series of personae to embody the dark side of her imagination. There is an opium-addicted fisherman's widow, a vengeful chorus of Salem witches, a doomed courtesan, and three grotesqueries based on Japanese drawings, including one after Kuniyoshi's "Yeoman Murdering his Deformed Wife with a Sickle." (It is interesting to compare Spires's three Japanese poems with Pollitt's quintet in *Antarctic Traveller.* Spires exploits the bitterly realistic aspects of the art whereas Pollitt tries to recreate their delicate sense of beauty.) Free from the constraints of the autobiographical lyric (and its contemporary American setting) Spires can explore extreme situations not afforded by her direct personal experience, and she achieves powerful, dramatic, and terrifyingly credible poems. The most impressive is "Exhumation," a dramatic monologue told from beyond the grave by Elizabeth Siddall, the consumptive wife of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. One may recall that Rossetti was so grief-stricken at her death that he interred the sole manuscript of his poems in her coffin only to have the body exhumed eight years later to retrieve them. Spires's poem is splendidly wrought, with each image helping to build its mood of cold, dispassionate hatred. It frightens me each time I reread it, and yet I do reread it since Spires has concentrated so much experience and perception here that one gets a jolt of illumination with each reaquaintance. In *Globe* Spires handles familiar subjects expertly and unfamiliar ones exceptionally. It is an enviable debut.

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How good it is to have Tony Connor's *New and Selected Poems.*[4] Connor's books have never been easy to get in the United States, and he has inexplicably been omitted from most anthologies, so this new volume will provide most Americans their first chance to read his work at length. I suspect that they will find much to enjoy here. Connor is an unusual poet from an unlikely background, and his work is both original and entertaining. Born in a working-class family in Lancashire in 1930, Connor left school at fourteen and embarked on a series of jobs to help support his mother and sister (his "swindler, con-man, and embezzler" father having run away to avoid arrest when the poet was five). Connor worked as paperboy, textile designer, cake decorator, and army tank driver before gradually establishing himself first as poet, then as television writer, and later (in America) as professor of poetry *sans* degree.

I mention the facts of Connor's life because he himself makes so much of them. Most of his work is openly autobiographical. His early poems depict working-class life in Lancashire in the lean years after the Second World War with much attention being directed at his own troubled family, especially the father he scarcely knew. When most poets open up about their childhood sorrows, the reader is tempted to close the book, for he knows a torrent of trivial memories and petty injustices vaguely shaped to resemble poems is about to pour forth. Not so with Connor. His family poems like "My Father's Walking Stick" are hard, concise, and unsentimental. While one feels they present the events of Connor's childhood very candidly, they never degenerate into mere confession, for the poet does not share the fashionable assumption that experience itself is a substitute for imagination. Too often autobiographical poets try to stun their readers into submission, stridently asserting "This is true! This really happened!" as if the shock of reality could compensate for the crudity of the retelling. Connor does not simply report events. He vividly recreates them, shaping each scene with the skill and care of a novelist.

Connor's early work is also full of poems which use his class and regional background to create memorable pictures of his own time and place. Perhaps his best poem is "Elegy for Alfred Hubbard," a portrait of a half incompetent old Lancashire plumber. (Curiously, although this poem is not well-known in this country it has been skillfully plagiarized by at least two American poets.) Another remarkable Lancashire poem is "Mrs. Root," which presents a neighborhood busybody obsessed with marriages and funerals. But Connor's interests are not limited by his regional background. Poems like "An Anonymous Painting" and "A Journal of Bad Times" reflect a broad cultural perspective. The only real complaint with

[4] NEW AND SELECTED POEMS, by *Tony Connor*. University of Georgia Press. $12.50; $6.95.

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Connor's *New and Selected Poems* is that the book is too short, and the selection overemphasizes his autobiographical poetry at the expense of his other work. Where, for example, is "Child's Bouncing Song," an ingenious piece of nonsense verse based on playground chants? Did either the poet or his editor deem this little gem not serious enough for inclusion? Where, too, is his "Fashionable Poet Reading," a devastating portrait of a pompous literary mediocrity? The inclusion of more poems like these would show the full range of Connor's accomplishment.

Connor is not a technically adventurous poet, but when his poems require it he can manage widely different styles with equal ease. On one page he can describe a "Lancashire Winter" in witty, all-knowing rhymed stanzas:

> The town remembers no such plenty,
> under the wind from off the moor.
> The labour exchange is nearly empty;
> stiletto heels on the Palais floor
> move between points of patent leather.
> Sheepskin coats keep out the weather.
>
> Commerce and Further Education
> won't be frozen. Dully free
> in snack bars and classrooms sits the patient
> centrally heated peasantry . . .

—whereas only a few pages before he used long, free verse lines (with a strong accentual base) and disjointed syntax to create a mysterious sense of social dislocation in "A Journal of Bad Times":

> In Autumn, begin.
> Uprooting geraniums,
> Shaking them gently for storage in darkness,
> had heard guns crackle in far streets.
> In the deepening sky, one evening,
> a plane wrote "Freedom"—a vaporous trail
> gone before sunset.
> Beyond the city, mountains—
> most often hidden. On clear days certain fields,
> a pike, glinting glass. Many went that way,
> wheels rumbling towards rock.
> None saw a good end . . .

In recent years Connor's work has not changed substantially in either subject or style. The thirty new poems in this volume still explore themes familiar from his earlier books, though many of them now have an American backdrop. "Reduced to a man of sense," he

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has developed no vatic pretensions in middle age and his work remains clear-headed, intelligent, and immensely readable. Two recent poems deserve special note, "Reminiscences Remembered," a witty portrait of an irreverent old bard making the university circuit (which must be at least partially based on Basil Bunting) and the volume's final poem, "And leave the voice of commerce blaring through an empty house," which leaves a tantalizing suggestion of what Connor may be up to in the future:

. . . .
Why bother to write at all,
with no mouthing oracle

at the ear of my study,
where I sit at the ready?

Reduced to a man of sense,
why need I nurture silence?

More useful to emulate
the folks next door, Fran and Dwight,

whose loud FM receiver
misses no bargain offer,

who rush to far discount stores
in their end-of-year-sale cars

and leave the voice of commerce
blaring through an empty house.

Frederick Feirstein's *Manhattan Carnival*[5] is a book-length narrative poem written in heroic couplets. Structured as a dramatic monologue, it borrows its narrative design from modern fiction, specifically those big-city novels like Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, Dos Passos' *Manhattan Transfer*, and, most importantly, Joyce's *Ulysses*, which seek to recreate the teeming reality of modern urban existence through the consciousness of their characters. Feirstein's protagonist, Mark Stern, is a quintessential New Yorker—smart, energetic, and slightly neurotic. Now at thirty-five ("*nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita* . . . "), he finds himself desperately unhappy over a separation from his unfaithful wife and unable to adjust to his unasked-for freedom. Observing the classical unities of time, place, and action, *Manhattan Carnival* presents one crucial day in Stern's life as he wanders through the city, building up the courage to meet his wife for a possible reconciliation. The poem moves forward *via*

[5] MANHATTAN CARNIVAL, by *Frederick Feirstein*. Countryman Press. $10.95.

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two plots: the external one of Stern's eight-hour journey through Manhattan (which it is possible to map out as exactly as Leopold Bloom's odyssey through Dublin—Stern begins his day on East Eighty-Sixth Street and gradually makes his way to the West Forties where he meets his wife); and the internal one of Stern's obsessive thoughts about his failed marriage.

The most amazing thing about *Manhattan Carnival* is that it actually works. Feirstein holds the reader's attention on every page and makes Manhattan come alive in verse. He manages the heroic couplet in a novel way which captures the hectic, fragmented character of city life, fitting in everything from shop signs to conversations on the street, from literary allusions to graffiti ("*For haircuts with a twist, call Dainty Jim*"). But significantly Feirstein's technique never calls attention to itself and is only used to further the narrative. He can render the most difficult scenes into quick, effective verse. For example, here is an argument between a querulous mother and her daughter overheard in the Central Park Zoo:

> "Here's white balloons with little colored mice
> Right in them, see?" "Mommy, oh please." "Not now!"
> "You always promise, but you never get."
> "Sometimes, you know, a person must forget
> His pleasures." "Why?" "Because you are a brat."
> "What did I do?" "You've taken off your hat
> To spite me." "But it's warming up, it's Spring!"
> "You've disobeyed me, you can't have a thing."
> "I'll keep it on for one balloon—a deal?"
> "No bargains with the devil." "Pleeease!" "Pigs squeal."

Here Feirstein has created a complete dramatic scene in only ten lines. He introduces three characters (the mother, child, and balloon vendor) and quickly develops two of them in a revealing dialogue. One also sees here how flexible and colloquial a form the couplet is in Feirstein's hands. Heroic couplets are difficult to write at any length without making the verse sound stiff and mannered, but there is nothing marmoreal about the language of *Manhattan Carnival*. Feirstein's couplets hark back to the lively form of Chaucer rather than the stately measures of Gray or Goldsmith. His language is never far from the everyday speech of educated men—suddenly heightened into poetry. This description of Stern's East Side apartment house, for example, seems perfectly conversational:

> I need the antiseptic house next door,
> Its plastic shrubs, its missing thirteenth floor,
> Its glass door with its wooden coat of arms,
> Its lobby with its European charms;
> Its French Provincial chairs, its Spanish chest,
> Its walls with scenes of gypsy Bucharest,

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Its German pewter mug and washing bowl;
Its elevators playing *Barcarole*,
Its terraces where crones play solitaire
Or paint their toes and set their platinum hair,
Its rows of built-in air conditioning vents,
Its windows mirroring the tenements
Across the street, ruins of a better Spring,
Less lonely, rootless, modern, maddening.

Feirstein also introduces a pageant of fascinating minor characters who troop through the pages of *Manhattan Carnival* for one brief but unforgettable appearance each: Stern's lecherous landlord, a Jewish cowgirl, a garrulous blind man on the bus, an ice-cream vendor in Central Park, and others.

Feirstein's ability to portray Manhattan and all its mad inhabitants, however, ultimately undercuts the effectiveness of his main story. Stern's passions and frustrations seem dwarfed by the city around him, and Manhattan eventually becomes more interesting than the man. This problem is inherent in the narrative structure of the poem. *Manhattan Carnival* alternates between two impulses—observation and action. One seeks to describe the city in all its variety, the other to tell the obsessive story of Stern's romance. In this poem, as in most of the big-city novels, the impulse towards observation triumphs, and the book ends up being more of a love song to Manhattan than to Stern's errant wife. But this is no inconsiderable achievement. Feirstein has single-handedly resuscitated a major verse form and used it ambitiously to challenge the smug contemporary assumptions of what will or will not work in verse. Had he succeeded completely he would have written one of the most important poems of the decade. As it is, he has certainly produced one of the most interesting and unexpected books of the year.

Our Ground Time Here Will be Brief[6] provides a comprehensive selection from Maxine Kumin's six previous books of verse, including her Pulitzer Prize winning volume, *Up Country*, in addition to twenty-nine new poems. Kumin is understandably a popular poet. She is an intelligent and sensitive woman who writes on the enduring themes of life and death, place and family. Essentially a domestic poet, she takes as her material the world of her everyday life in rural New Hampshire—her home, children, neighbors, land, and animals, especially horses, which she has loved since girlhood. She is a strong woman whose independence is natural, not ideological, and the usual modesty of her tone does not hide her underlying self-assurance. She writes confidently about what she knows—the death of friends, the departures of her children, the landscape around her—and she does so honestly and directly without striking fashionable postures.

[6] OUR GROUND TIME HERE WILL BE BRIEF, by *Maxine Kumin*. Penguin. $7.95p.

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Even when she tries a trick in a poem, as in this passage from "The Retrieval System," it seems candid and unimpeachable:

> I remember the funeral. *The Lord is my shepherd,*
> we said. I don't want to brood. Fact: it is people who fade,
> it is animals that retrieve them. A boy
> I loved once keeps coming back as my yearling colt,
> cocksure at the gallop, racing his shadow
> for the hell of it. He runs merely to be.
> A boy who was lost in the war thirty years ago
> and buried at sea.

There is much to enjoy in Kumin's volume, especially among the new poems. Her readers will be glad to see further reports on her engaging neighbor, Henry Manley, the eighty-two-year-old Yankee bachelor, whose presence has enlivened Kumin's poetry since his first appearance in *The Nightmare Factory*. There is also a very moving group of poems about her brother and his brave struggle against the crippling nervous disease which killed him, and there is an affecting elegy for her friend, Anne Sexton, written "on being interviewed by her biographer." The people in Kumin's poetry come alive. She captures their personality and makes her affection for them contagious.

Yet with all these strengths, there is a curious thinness to Kumin's verse. She uses language in a skillful but utilitarian way. It is a medium to communicate the facts of her poetry, and even in her formal poems one finds little evidence of joy in language for its own sake. The rhymes seem forced and incidental, the metrical pattern filled out rather than exploited. Even Kumin's most lyrical outbursts sound flat and perfunctory, as in the climax to "Sunbathing on a Rooftop in Berkeley":

> O summers without end, the exact truth is
> we are expanding sideways as haplessly
> as in the mirrors of the Fun House.
> We bulge toward the separate fates that await us
> sometimes touching, as sleeves will, whether
> or not a hug is intended.

Perhaps it is precisely this dependence on "the exact truth" that sets the limits on Kumin's achievement. When her poems succeed, they do so mainly on the strength of the characters they introduce, the scenes they describe, the stories they tell. While her language presents the subject matter clearly enough, it rarely heightens it sufficiently to make the exact words definitive. Her poems are moving without being memorable. Ultimately Kumin is a writer who has applied her diligence more to exploring her own life than to the possibilities of her medium.

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CLARA CLAIBORNE PARK

Them or Us

When I see a couple of kids
And guess he's fucking her and she's
Taking pills or wearing a diaphragm,
I know this is paradise

Everyone old has dreamed of all their lives—
Bonds and gestures pushed to one side
Like an outdated combine harvester,
And everyone young going down the long slide

To happiness, endlessly. I wonder if
Anyone looked at me, forty years back,
And thought, *That'll be the life;*
No God any more, or sweating in the dark

About hell and that, or having to hide
What you think of the priest. He
And his lot will all go down the long slide
Like free bloody birds. . . .

Fascination, hostility, admiration, envy—Philip Larkin's poem shows what Patricia Spacks tells: the adult view of adolescence isn't simple—as if (since we're practically all over thirty now) we didn't know. In *The Adolescent Idea*,[1] she adds to our own rueful perceptions the unsurprising news that it never was—that the emotions with which our ancestors contemplated the antics of the young were, if not as uncomfortable as our own, still ambiguous enough to write a book about. If they didn't seem so, that is only because the adults who put young people into novels—Fielding, Richardson, Burney, Goldsmith, Smollett, Austen, Scott, Thackeray, Trollope, Mrs. Gaskell, and more, plus the authors of innumerable volumes of Advice to the Young—possessed so much more confidently than we do their society, their values, and themselves. The Season of Life when "a boy begins to consort himself with Men, and think himself one," is that in which he is most "raw and unruly," most likely to hearken to the advice of "warm Blood and prevailing Fashion," not to mention "the Temptations of his companions, just as wise as himself"; it is, writes John Locke with confidence, the Season "that most requires the Eye and Authority of his Parents, and Friends to govern it." "Every man," wrote William Cobbett in 1829, more than a

[1] THE ADOLESCENT IDEA: Myths of Youth and the Adult Imagination, by *Patricia Meyer Spacks*. Basic Books. $17.00.

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hundred years later, "will recollect . . . how many wild and ridiculous things he has said and done between the age of sixteen and that of twenty-two." As time goes on, fortunately (Locke again), "Reason and Foresight begin a little to take place, and mind a Man of his Safety and Improvement."

Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century authors, of course, are clearly on the side of Reason, Safety, and Improvement. Tom Jones will simmer down; his warm heart, if not his warm Blood, foretells the possibility of a future Squire Allworthy in the making; Francis Osbaldistone, his flurry with Bonnie Prince Charlie behind him, will return to his father to take up his inheritance and a true Scotsman's life of commercial enterprise, for all the world like Jerry Rubin. Girls, of course, have got to be much more careful. "Be good, dear Girl, and let who will be clever"—a line my grandmother used to quote to me quite seriously in the thirties of this century. Fictions concerning warm feminine Blood must inculcate compliance, not only in the outcome but throughout. Best to do this by making the heroine herself its emblem; Clarissa spends most of a very long novel making explicit the disastrous consequences of her sole imprudence; Pamela turns her acceptance of her elders' value-system into a means of power, and by withholding what her master wants, obtains the status she wants even more than the satisfactions whispered by the Blood. Evelina has so thoroughly internalized compliance that her emotional ups and downs—enough of them to hold our interest through a long and charming novel—concern mainly social embarrassment. Jane Austen's young women—the clever ones we're interested in—make less devastating mistakes than Clarissa's, but they too learn better, and though we may think them uncannily wise and controlled already, learn to be wiser still, their ease within restraint represented by the marriages that end the books and assert the continuity of past and future.

Life does not quite stop then, but it seems to. A few English novels might take their plots from adventure. But most, written for readers assumed to be overwhelmingly female, many if not most of them unmarried, concerned themselves with affairs of the heart. Which meant that novels would deal with courtship, not marriage—since adultery was scarcely a subject suitable for the young to read about. Hence all these adolescents.

That Passion should be ruled by Reason was of course a pervasive eighteenth-century theme, oft thought and very frequently expressed. John Gregory, as he wrote in *A Father's Legacy to His Daughters* (1774), expatiated upon "this subject of courtship, because it may most readily happen to you at that early period of life when you can have little experience or knowledge of the world, when your passions are warm, and your judgments not arrived at such full maturity as to be able to correct them." William Dodd's *Sermons to Young Men* advised his readers to await that season when their

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passions "would readily submit to the government of reason" and "right principles . . . be so fixed in us, as to influence every important action of our future lives." But since, as John Bennett notes in *Strictures on Female Education*, "the passions were implanted in us by the Deity, as the springs of all our actions," they have their place. Ms. Spacks detects an under-message of admiration even in those fictions in which young people like Clarissa, Pamela, and Joseph Andrews "inhabit plots depending on their remarkable dominance over their own passions." As do Jane Austen's young women, who through their capacity for self-restraint earn the settled happiness of a marriage of affection.

In these novels, Spacks maintains, the values of the adult world are subtly if unconsciously undermined. The adults in Jane Austen's novels are more likely than not to be silly (like Mrs. Bennet and Mr. Woodhouse) or irresponsible (like clever Mr. Bennet); it is the young who provide "a nexus of social hope." Tom Jones will live in the country; he will not enter "the world," which is not really good enough for him. Scott may end *Rob Roy* with Francis Osbaldistone agreeing to "follow whatever path his father chooses for him," with the narrator's and author's full conscious approval. Frank will even find, says Scott, "in the fluctuations of mercantile speculation . . . something captivating to the adventurer." But like *Tom Jones*, the novel as a whole has a different message: one which affirms through the romance of the Young Pretender and the noble outlaw Rob Roy the generous imprudence of the young. These compliant endings, Spacks thinks, "are not really happy"; counseling the young "to submit rather than surpass their elders," they "feel like necessities, not triumphs." "The tone of this conservative message, corresponding to implications of Austen's more confined fictions, foretells the melancholy that marks much Victorian fiction of adolescence."

Nexus of hope or not, the young will subside into replicas of our safe selves. Or of the vanished adult selves of the vanished past; ours are not so safe. The eighteenth- and nineteenth-century adolescent is an outsider who will become tamed, but whatever the losses, there will be gains. He or she, however diminished, will become an insider within a society which can provide at least the satisfactions of security, stability, and (if you stay in the country) decency. In the twentieth century, as Larkin's poem shows as clearly as any of the modern novels that Spacks examines, the adolescent has become the insider and it is we who feel excluded. *Romeo and Juliet* exists, of course, to remind us that it's not only late twentieth-century types who think that adolescents have all the thrills. But adults did not need to fear Romeo and Juliet, or even Tybalt and Mercutio; they could weep for them, because for better or worse the adult world was securely in control. Prince Hal loses something of himself on his way to the crown. Shakespeare shows us that, but does not

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allow us to deny that ultimately he and England gain. The undermessage Spacks finds in *Tom Jones* and *Rob Roy* is a very old one; though Spacks sticks to the past 300 years we can recognize it in *Antigone*. Adults have always known the young would survive them, and the contemplation of their youth and warm blood must always have been tinged with admiration and envy. But Larkin's envy is more conscious and more corrosive, and it hurts Larkin, not the impervious young. It is possible to fear the young, now; in many places it would be insane not to. It's us and them; when we lock our doors against them, we can feel ourselves shut in, but also out. We can also doubt—as they do already—the worth of our control, or whether we have anything of value to pass on. *A Clockwork Orange* shows us an adult society fully worthy of the horrifying young sociopath who preys upon it. The power today's adolescent will assume—if he or she is willing to assume it, by no means a foregone conclusion—is not worth having.

Interesting to watch this come about: the road, says Spacks, lies through Stephen Dedalus and Paul Morel, who inhabit novels where the sympathies of the author, though occasionally tinged with irony, are clearly with their young protagonists. Spacks shows convincingly how Lawrence, far from correcting Paul's complacent forcing of Miriam into the sterile categories the two of them have created for her, endorses it. "Paul's point of view—shocking in its self-justification and its contempt for the other," shades imperceptibly into the author's. So *Sons and Lovers* ends, as *Portrait of the Artist* does too, "with the promise of an unknown future, the isolated protagonist refusing to yield to the demands of others, setting out to confront the unknown world, determined to live, to strive, to win." These romantic outsiders will never become insiders; they do not wish to, nor do readers or author wish it for them. The progeny of Milton's Satan and Byron's Cain, their artist's vocation updated them for the twentieth century. It is not coincidence, thinks Spacks, that they are young: "Adolescence emblemizes many of the values clustered under the label of 'modernism.' Its heroes refuse to surpass their youthful condition; instead, heroes and novelists alike give signs of believing that this condition itself surpasses maturity."

Interesting stuff. How could it fail to be? That adolescence is perennially interesting is the point. Yet *The Adolescent Idea* is not as interesting as it ought to be. The book is, as Spacks says, a survey, and one from which she is honest enough to say "few clear trends emerge." One which does is that which I have emphasized in this review, "the movement toward increasingly intense identification with the young on the part of novelists who evoke them," since "more and more now, as social organization provides less satisfaction, *everyone* wants to be an outsider." The book is full of stuff, yet it's oddly unsatisfying. A survey of "Myths of Youth and the Adult Imagination" promises a great deal. It's the kind of book which

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should take ten years to write; we come to it expecting to expatiate o'er this vast expanse, if not of Man, at least of adolescence. Yet even within the author's chosen three hundred years, the survey is curiously limited in method and in scope. The subject invites us into the thick of intellectual and social history; it asks us to make connections. It's fair enough that Telemachus and Nausicaa are off limits, and poetry too. (The single poem considered is, oddly, *Paradise Lost*, scarcely an adolescent paradigm.) One cannot write about everything. But if we can understand why Romeo and Juliet get only a mention and Prince Hal and Cordelia not even that, the chosen centuries are full of young people whom we can't help thinking of and who are sorely missed. Does it matter if you're not English? Where are Werther and Julien Sorel and Fabrice? Where are Ivan and Alyosha and the other young Russians who so feverishly, in their green youth, discuss ideas? Where, for heaven's sake, is Natasha? Where, if we are resolutely Anglophone, are Isabel Archer and Daisy Miller and poor Nanda of *The Awkward Age*? Instead, the author resurrects Arthur Pendennis and Francis Osbaldistone, who as I hope I have hinted frequents *Rob Roy* by Sir Walter Scott, and Edward Waverley (that's why they're *called* the Waverley novels, for God's sake). More familiar figures are there, to be sure—Maggie from *The Mill on the Floss* and Hetty from *Adam Bede*, though Dorothea Brooke is missing. The discussion of Jane Austen goes on and on, yet the Bennet sisters and the delectable Emma are barely mentioned, while we have full-dress treatments of Fanny of *Mansfield Park*, Catherine of *Northanger Abbey* (bet you didn't remember *her* name), and that least adolescent of young women, Anne Elliot of *Persuasion*.

Nobody questions the right of authors to select what they want to write about, or to take less traveled paths—but we finish this survey feeling that a great deal has been left unsurveyed, much of it of greater potential significance than what has been discussed. Spacks's approach is analytic, not synthetic; she seems more comfortable considering works in isolation. The novelist who wrote *Portrait of the Artist* gives signs of believing that youth surpasses maturity? It is as if she did not know—as of course she does—that the *Portrait* has a sequel, in which the high adolescent flight that ends the novel, as it has ended every chapter in it, is, as it is in every next chapter, abruptly brought low. Joyce wrote *Ulysses* to celebrate not Stephen but Leopold Bloom, who is everything that the young artist is not—settled, domestic, responsible—caught, and satisfied to be caught, in all the nets that Stephen proclaimed he would fly by. *There once was a lounger named Stephen, / Whose youth was most odd and uneven. / He throve on the smell / Of a horrible Hell / That a Hottentot wouldn't believe in.* Joyce wrote that; he also wrote in another letter, "Stephen no longer interests me." The narrator of *Portrait* is so close to Stephen as to be scarcely distinguishable. It is action and setting, not narrative voice, that cut Stephen down to size.

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There is another difficulty. When so many of the chosen texts are novels we have read twenty years since if at all, readers are dependent on skillful summary, the journeyman kind of critic's work that Edmund Wilson did so well (and enjoyed so much; he was never happier than when summarizing a novel that could be read only in the original Hungarian). Spacks doesn't have the knack of this; the material we need in order to understand and appreciate her discussions seeps out over many pages, and is often not available when we need it. Moreover, the book falls all too readily into the longueurs of textual analysis; extended attention to narrative voice and to the implications of words and sentence-structure may be useful in the training of selected English majors, but it is these methods' fruits of understanding, not their detailed practice, that nourish that common reader with whom a reviewer must ally herself—unless the author has the panache of an Empson or an Auerbach's profound sense of how a whole rich culture of ideas inheres in style. Few have. Spacks sets out to show that "the literary critic's skills can map new contours in terrain long claimed by social scientists." But to apply the techniques of close reading not only to novels of varying quality but to eighteenth-century advice books and twentieth-century psychologists is, if not a work of supererogation, certainly a test of patience. There are more direct ways of finding out where these folks are coming from than teasing out the implications of their metaphors, the energy saved to be applied to further exploration of the literature of adolescence.

From unfocused organization to careless proofreading, this is a book that seems to have been finished before it was done. It is all too easy, if you've been reading a lot of sociology and psychology, to fall into a prose of truly numbing generality. Not all the time; Spacks can write pointedly and well, and the book gets easier to attend to as it goes along. But it's a long journey to take in company with someone to whom the word "emblemize" seems natural, and for whom people are invariably "narcissistic" rather than selfcentered or selfish. The young are said to have "passional proclivities." "Martha Quest's potential for redemption, her single line of force, stems from her capacity for perception." "The adolescent's adult fate, many eighteenth-century moralists suggest, will depend on his or her youthful intake." If the language we use makes the difference Spacks insists it does, we can be sure that *that* is not what any eighteenth-century moralist suggested. I was sure I had only to wait for "parameter," and sure enough, my patience was rewarded. "Easy writing," said an eighteenth-century moralist whose name I've forgotten, "makes demn'd hard reading."

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VERNON YOUNG

Fearful Adventures and Painful Peregrinations

The Road to Kabul[1] is paved with good intentions: the authors frankly acknowledge that it was designed as an aid to political enlightenment, inspired by the sudden prominence in 1979 of place-names notorious in Central Asian history: Herat, Kabul, Jelalabad and Peshawar; "a prominence which brought into focus a part of the world that enjoyed an uneasy sleep since Britain abdicated its eastern Empire, and the Northwest Frontier and the Khyber Pass were no longer policed by the likes of Kim." As I write this review, the status of hostilities in Afghanistan has been relegated for some months by The Road to the Falklands, by the Battle of Lebanon and by intermittent outbreaks of the Polish insurrection. By the time I'm in print, Afghanistan may well become again the crucial territory it had been when Great Britain and Czarist Russia confronted one another with proximate spheres of interest.

My personal reception of this splendid anthology, which covers a full seven hundred years (from Marco Polo to Fitzroy Maclean) may not be of a kind the authors wished to encourage. Upon putting it aside I was prepared to agree with Lawrence Durrell that "History is an eternal repetition of the wrong way to live." Or, accurately in this context, of the wrong way to die! Historical events are perpetually being reinterpreted as the interpreters themselves occupy different positions in the flux they are attempting to treat as an unchanging resumé. Genocide has a different ring for us today than it had, say, seventy-five years ago. Asiatic hordes and pyramids of skulls might have once made us yawn, since their increasing remoteness in time guaranteed their irrelevance; they could impress only those among us who had a morbid infatuation with endings or an adolescent nostalgia for cruelty seen as romance. The idea that our own century could recapitulate, in its own fashion, the atrocities of the Golden Horde or of Timur-Leng (Tamerlane), would have been scorned as a wasteful backward glance for which a defecting progressive deserved to be converted into a pillar of stone.

Devouring Time has failed to blunt the lion's paws. I find de Gaury and Winstone's preface to the career of Marco Polo less a reminder of what happened in the thirteenth century, the age of Ghenjiz Khan in Asia, than it is of what happened in ours, and

[1] THE ROAD TO KABUL: An Anthology, ed. by *Gerald de Gaury* and *H. V. F. Winstone*. Macmillan. $15.95.

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nothing taking place today persuades me that a version of it will not be a feature of the twenty-first. When Ghenjiz Khan and his two sons led their armies into Transoxiana, reducing "city after city to tutelage and ruin," only Bokhara offered substantial resistance, holding off the horde for six months; "when the battle was over its people were butchered and the governor killed after molten silver had been poured into his eyes and ears." (Already this begins to sound like a poem by Anthony Hecht!) "At Samarkand a garrison of 40 000, deserted by its ruler, surrendered without resistance, and was massacred for its pains." Virtually the same story is repeated from the Hindu Kush to Persia. After his final campaign against Tangut in 1227, where Ghenjiz "was by no means tired of his destructive mission," he died and his body was transported to the camps of his wives in the valley of Kilien; "everyone on the route was murdered lest his death be reported before his successor ascended the Tartar throne."

A hundred years or so later, Timur-Leng (Tamerlane) was impressing his name (mispronounced) on posterity with greater success (in terms of territorial conquest) than Ghenjiz Khan, and with the aid of no fewer skulls for his architectural replacements of the city centers he sacked. But Timur has redeemed his worse reputation by becoming the master builder of Samarkand (where he is entombed in the mosque of Goor-Ameer) and the beautifier of Shahr-i-Sabz, in gratitude for having been born there. The editors have rediscovered one of the most unreserved memorials written by a Timurophile, that of A. Polovtsoff, a Russian emigré who, in the thirties, lived in Paris and wrote *in English* a reminiscence of his youth in Bokhara and Samarkand—by then, within Soviet Turkestan. After describing, with language appropriate to the Psalms, the cities of Timur's residence and of his birth, he turns with equal resources for elegy to the abandoned town of Otrar (near Tashkent) where Timur died. The river on which Otrar was situated altered its course; without a water supply, the city perished, the mud or brick houses re-mingled with the earth and for miles around fragments of colored pottery mocked the ephemeral brilliance of human effort.

> . . . as though a curse had fallen on the spot where Timur had died. No life could sprout forth again where that great life was extinguished, and only innumerable fragments of what men created stare up at the pitiless sky from a wilderness through which no human being passes. . . . Samarkand secured for herself the priceless relic of Timur's body, and here alone is his memory alive. In truly Oriental fashion, both his birthplace and his death place have been forgotten; whereas near the exquisite sanctuary of his resting-place the faithful servant for ever stands and prays over the ashes of the great Timur.

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For this prose, so the editors tell us, the author apologized for his "misuse" of the English language! All the same, I should like to relay a second opinion, no less subjective, on the object of the Russian's fervor, given by Rosita Forbes, one of the most personable woman travellers of the 1930s.

> . . . I wondered if Stalin's interpretation of the world would be more durable than Tamerlane's. For the culture of the great Mongol had been entirely artificial. He wanted to capture the trade between East and West. To do so he created—with American speed—the finest bazaar towns between China and Europe. But no renaissance of literature and manners accompanied the fugitive magnificence produced by the tyrant's architecture. The craftsmen brought from Delhi, Damascus and Persia accomplished their work as quickly as possible, thinking only of the immediate effect. . . . Timur the Cripple remained illiterate, a soldier instead of a statesman, harsh, cruel, a lover of truth rather than beauty.[2]

(What did she expect? Chimes?)

For centuries after Timur, Central Asian history is an epic of monotony: opulence, broken truces, broken limbs. Travellers from England, from France and from Austria-Hungary take the road to Kabul and return with narratives that extol the majesty of Persian courts and the glamor of Afghanistan bazaars, while recounting severities of Moslem custom beyond Western belief. With Imperial Russia advancing from the north-west and Imperial Great Britain penetrating the Hindu Kush from the south-east, Afghanistan becomes squarely the buffer region between Russian and Chinese Turkestan. Being less ruthless than the Russians, the British fare badly. They were decisively cut to pieces in the First Afghan War (1838), they were foully betrayed by the Amir Yakub Khan in their attempts at honorable settlement after the Second Afghan War (1878). Russia's success in the north central area of Turkestan is uncompromisingly illustrated by Skobeleff's conquest of Geok Tepe, given here in a chapter of Lord Curzon's treatise, *Russia in Central Asia in 1889 and the Anglo-Russian Question*. General Skobeleff, known to the Turkomans as "Bloody Eyes," achieved a brilliantly organized assault on the fortress town; when the enemy population poured out in retreat, Skobeleff ordered his troops to pursue them and give no quarter.

> Eight thousand persons of both sexes and all ages were mercilessly cut down and slain. On the morning after the battle they lay in

[2] Not in *The Road to Kabul*. See *Forbidden Road: Kabul to Samarkand* (pp. 250–251), Cassell, 1937.

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rows like freshly mown hay . . . In the fort were found the corpses of 6500 men and some thousands of living women and children. All who had not succeeded in escaping were killed to a man by the Russian soldiers. . . . Troops were allowed to loot without interruption for four days and booty to the value of 600,000 pounds was found inside the fortress.

Lest the reader believe that this anthology is principally a montage of massacre, let me correct an impression probably dictated by a quaking sensibility. There is also present an elegant and extensively informed essay on the gardens of the Moghuls by Mrs. C. M. Villiers-Stuart; a gorgeous word-picture by Jonas Hanway (eighteenth century) of the Nadir Shah's encampment and his panoply of sixty women with whom he often rode at the head of his army (the main body being kept a mile distant!); various ethnological and linguistic parentheses explaining, for instance, the alleged descent of Afghans from the Lost Tribes of Israel and the surprisingly recent denotation of the word, *Afghan*; and a jet-aircraft survey of the entire region, in 1958, by Sir Fitzroy Maclean, even as the last and most undefeatable horde was already appearing in Samarkand: official Soviet tourism.

I should also note, belatedly, that Gerald de Gaury and H. V. F. Winstone are themselves authorities on the Near and Middle East. Mr. de Gaury, who has represented the British government in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Egypt, has suppressed, with unrelenting modesty, any mention of his authorship of, among other works, *Arabia Phoenix* (1946), a consummate introduction to the character and style of the Arabian ruling class before *oil* inexorably altered the structure and the relationships of the Arab world.

Except for a few convulsive shudders from Ida Pfeiffer when describing the Chinese punishment of felons (e.g. pressing the poor wretch between two planks and sawing him in half) and a harrowing chronicle by Kate Marsden of her mission to the lepers of Siberia, Leo Hamalian's diverting anthology[3] is not, in the main, a panorama of man's incivility. The women he cites, intrepid though all of them were, had no occasion to enter territories where war was being waged and they were seldom in places altogether remote from some vestige of law. Even so, they suffered, in many instances, hardship enough. Travel anywhere, even on the Continent, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was from our standpoint an ordeal; rarely could it have been an unremitting pleasure. For a woman to have endured it, even to the ends of the earth, was a feat which cannot be taken lightly. In view of the epic effort many of these females exerted in opposition to custom and in defiance of

[3] LADIES ON THE LOOSE: Women Travellers of the 18th and 19th Centuries, ed. by *Leo Hamalian*. Dodd, Mead. $11.95.

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their alleged physical inferiority, the title of Hamalian's collection is too flippant by far. I suspect that the publisher may have chosen it, unsure of the reception such a book might get: an unnecessary fear, I should think, when today any defence or celebration of women is in the forefront of riveted attention.

Europe and the Middle East are represented herein by women already familiar to students of literature or sociology: Hester Lynch Piozzi, Mary Wollstonecraft, Lady Mary Wortley Montague, Harriet Martineau and Frederika Bremer (one of the founding mothers of feminism who also wrote unusually perceptive studies of the United States, Greece and the Holy Land). Less well known are those who reached the Far East and Africa. These have the greater interest for me: the more remote the culture, the greater challenge to the European consciousness trying to interpret it; and the more remote, the greater the hazards. While readability, as Hamalian sensibly insists, is the basic criterion, *danger* is the most alluring ingredient of the travel literature we find memorable. For this and other reasons, *Ladies on the Loose* is an indispensable supplement to Dorothy Middleton's critique, *Victorian Lady Travellers* (1965).

If miles and countries traversed and pages of print published are taken as the measure, Ida Pfeiffer (Austrian) and Isabella Bird Bishop (English) were probably the most widely travelled women of their century. Both of them were prolific and untiring; both seem to have lost sight of the original impulses that sped them on their way. Insatiable curiosity supported their lifelong tourism; pushing their luck to the last they died in the saddle, so to speak. Ida Pfeiffer contracted Madagascar fever; Mrs. Bishop, in delicate health, at the age of seventy-three, nonetheless packed her luggage for another voyage to China, then collapsed into her final illness. "On 7.October, 1904, [in Edinburgh] she died as she had lived, in flight from life's humdrum routines, under a hired roof, with her luggage corded and labelled for a strange port on the other side of the world."[4] She wrote at least eight volumes on as many countries, including Persia, Kurdistan, Korea and China; most of them, I confess, I find tedious to read. Daughter of a clergyman, she had all the *sober* assets of the model traveller—patience, observation, tolerance of aliens, personal rectitude; radically she lacked temperament and what, for a writer, goes with it—style. Hamalian has picked one of her more engaging passages: her sojourn among the Ainus of northern Japan, an infrequent object of travellers' curiosity. For what the distinction is worth, she was the first woman to visit these people. Ida Pfeiffer was a First, too, on more than one occasion. Paying no heed either to rumor or to reliable warnings, she followed her bent for travelling through the untamed parts of South

[4] From *Victorian Lady Travellers*, by Dorothy Middleton. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965.

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America, India, Persia and Russia; the climax of her fearlessness was an interlude in Sumatra where she was the first European to whom a tribe of man-eaters had said, "Be our guest!"

Kate Marsden was uniquely motivated and fatally committed. Inheriting a family background of chronic illness, she became a trained nurse (at that period impossible before the pioneer accomplishment of Florence Nightingale) and in her pursuit of the profession in far-off places (Bulgaria and New Zealand, for example) she dedicated herself to the research and cure of that dreadful affliction, leprosy. In the face of seemingly immovable obstacles, such as lack of financial support and influential cooperation from anyone, she finally obtained permission from the Empress of Russia to investigate the leper colonies of the Yakutsk region in the Siberian wilderness, travelling by sledge and horseback (with not a word of Russian in her head) under conditions so primitive they are unimaginable even after you've read her recital of them. At that time (1891) the universal custom was not to treat leprosy but to ignore it and to exile the victims of it as far away and as inaccessibly as possible. Moreover, the healthy offspring of leper families were condemned to remain outcast all their lives.

Among the many indelible horrors narrated by Marsden in Hamalian's extract, one, for certain, would have confirmed Ivan Karamazov in his resolve to give back to God his ticket-of-leave. It concerns an orphaned child who had an inheritance of four cows. Since his parents were dead, his uncle, who wanted to take possession of the cows, informed the community that his nephew was a leper. Condemned, hence, to isolation, the child was led into the forest where his uncle had built a shed for him, barely large enough to house a dog. There he was abandoned, without food or drink. "After some time the child was found dead; he had died of starvation and cold. His uncle had buried him without a coffin, and when the doctor opened his body, he found nothing but a little clay in his stomach."

Kate Marsden, who must have had a will of iron, prevailed upon the Empress to establish a hospital for lepers, which was opened in 1897 at Viluisk. Nearly a hundred patients were admitted in the nineties but by the end of War I this number had decreased to nineteen. Today, the hospital is no longer in existence, having achieved its purpose.[5] Kate Marsden, herself, was broken by the Siberian ordeal; she passed her last thirty years as an invalid.

Mary Kingsley (1862–1900) arrived, fittingly, at the close of the Victorian era. In the only two books she lived long enough to write (*West African Studies* and *Travels in West Africa*), she introduced the *smile* into travel literature. She could make canoeing through a tan-

[5] So Dorothy Middleton was informed when, finding no record in England of the sequel to Kate Marsden's initiative, she wrote to Moscow (in the sixties, I assume) and received a prompt reply from a Soviet expert on leprosy.

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gled mangrove swamp, encountering an eight-feet-long crocodile or sharing a cloudburst with an outraged leopard seem hilarious diversions. Here (included in Hamalian's chapter) she sights a herd of five elephants.

> I should have felt my favorite rifle fly to my shoulder, and then, carefully sighting for the finest specimen, have fired. The noble beast should have stumbled forward, recovered itself, and shedding its life-blood behind it have crashed away into the forest. I should then have tracked it, and either with one well-directed shot have given it its quietus, or have got charged by it, the elephant passing completely over my prostrate body; either termination is good form, but I never have these things happen, and never will.

She was decidedly *not* "a Victorian in the Jungle," as her 1957 biographer, Olwen Campbell, sub-titled her. She was an original, and a stylist in the modern feeling for that word; the style was derived from her empirical conceptions and her authentic wit: a protective strategy, no doubt; she was not as carefree as her high-comedy manner proposed. By the age of thirty, when she embarked for West Africa, she was emotionally burned out from the moral blackmail imposed on her for years by her family of hypochondriacs in London. Her subsequent expeditions, on the coast and in the interior, for which she prepared herself by studying ethnology, trade and practical navigation, were in a real sense substitutes for extinction. "Dead tired and feeling no one had need of me any more . . . I went down to West Africa to die," she wrote some years later to a friend. "West Africa amused me and was kind to me and was scientifically interesting—and did not want to kill me just then. I am in no hurry. I don't care one way or the other for a year or so."

A year or so was what she had left. She had in fact been sustained by her intellectual independence and by her enthusiasm for the saner objectives of patriotism. She pursued knowledge in the field in order to define justice at home. With no sentimental love of the aborigine for his own sake and with a skeptically tinged devotion to Empire, her attitude in sum seems to have been, "If you *must* have colonial ambitions, you should develop colonial responsibility; here are some suggestions for acquiring it!" Back in England, after 1895, she lectured the public and hectored the powers that were, until the Imperial Institute rewarded her by asking her to return to Africa, during the Boer War, as a volunteer nurse in their shamefully deficient hospitals. She was assigned to the Simonstown hospital for prisoners and within two months of her arrival she was dead—of amoebic dysentery—underplaying her griefs to the end. I entertain the hope that somewhere in South Africa there is a headstone, inscribed simply, *Mary Kingsley*: She travelled, She suffered—and She smiled.

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Notes on Contributors

The essay in this issue by EDWARD JOSEPH SHOBEN, JR.* began as an address to the Jane Austen Society of North America. Mr. Shoben is a clinical and consulting psychologist; his recent books include *Lionel Trilling: Mind and Character* and *Mental Health: The Human Perspective.*

JOAN MURRAY* has just assembled her first full-length collection of poems. This year, on a NYSCA grant, she is Writer in Residence at The Niagara Council of the Arts.

JEROME MAZZARO's latest book is *The Figure of Dante* (Princeton). A collection of his poems, *The Caves of Love*, is forthcoming from Jazz Press.

JOHN O'BRIEN is now completing a novel and a book of short stories.

JOHN HOLLOWAY has recently finished a book-length poem on Cambridge and the English Fenland. A new collection of lyric poems is also nearing completion.

BARRY SPACKS's *Spacks Street: New and Selected Poems* was recently published by Johns Hopkins University Press.

ROBERT SWANSON* is poetry editor of *California Quarterly.*

KRASSIN HIMMIRSKY* was born forty-five years ago in Bulgaria. He has served as cultural attaché at the Bulgarian Embassy in Washington, D.C.

ANNE S. PERLMAN's first collection of poetry, "Sorting It Out," appeared in 1982 from Carnegie-Mellon University Press.

PRESCOTT EVARTS, JR.* teaches English at Monmouth College in New Jersey. He has recently completed a poetry collection and is now at work on a novel.

JAMES REISS's new collection, *Express*, is due this spring from the University of Pittsburgh Press.

ARNOLD KLEIN's* work has appeared in *The Soho Weekly News, The Nation,* and *Harper's.*

A graduate of Yale University and the Iowa Writers' Workshop, OLIVIA HOLMES* currently lives in Rome, working as a translator and teacher of English.

JEFFREY MEYERS'* *D. H. Lawrence and the Experience of Italy* will soon be published. Mr. Meyers has just completed another book, *Disease and the Novel.*

JAY PARINI's first book of poetry, *Anthracite Country*, was published last spring by Random House.

CLARA CLAIBORNE PARK teaches English at Williams College.

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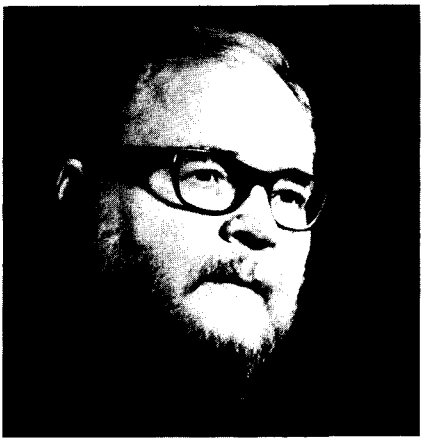

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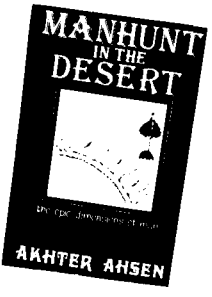

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